CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL OF THE "REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GEO-ECONOMICS" DEGREE AT THE "ST. CYRIL AND ST. METHODIUS" UNIVERSITY OF VELIKO TARNOVO, BULGARIA

Atanas Dermendzhiev¹, Dimitar Simeonov*, Martin Doykov*

*"St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo, Department of Geography, Bulgaria

Abstract: Education today is extremely important for the development of every country. It should prepare specialists, who are able to estimate the advantages and disadvantages of the separate regions, their economic potential on the base of the available resources, and to give the directions for future development. However, these specialists should be well prepared in different fields, most important of which regional development and geo-economics. This paper presents the "Regional Development and Geo-economics" Degree at the University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, its nature and the reasons for its introduction.

Key words: regional development, geo-economics, curriculum, degree

Introduction

The necessity of prosperity of our nation is connected with the training of specialists, competent in the founding activities for the realization of innovative to the requirements of the contemporaneity ideas (Живковић и Јовановић, 2011; 2006; Јовановић и Живковић, 2007, Dawkins, 2003; Glasson and Marshall, 2007; Griffiths and Wall, 2004, Вујадиновић и др., 2010). Together with the question about the national security, and because of it, the question about the regional development, based on stability and socio-cultural succession in combination with the geo-economic aspect of

¹ Correspondence to: adermendjiev1960@abv.bg

the problem, is of extreme importance (Павловић и Шабих, 2006; Тошић, 2012; Шабих и Павловић, 2007; Tulumović, 2015, Winkler, 2012). The reduction of the postulates of science in accordance with the social realities to their application in the educational practice imposes the appearance and the rich in content “filling” of polyvalence degrees, such as “Regional Development and Geo-economics” (Witherick, et al., 2001).

The curriculum of the “Regional Development and Geo-economics” degree is developed according to the European and National Qualifications Framework, the main normative base and the methodical standards, approved by the structures of the Veliko Tarnovo University, authorized with the respective powers.

As much as the regional development is connected with the process of achieving of stable and balanced development in particular territories by directing resources to them, the preparation of adequate to the situation specialist should be in conformity with the possibilities to participate in the purposeful realization of projects and programs for fulfillment of concrete socio-economic activities.

The education in regional development requires the necessity of acquiring of knowledge and competencies in the context of geographical comprehension of the regional prosperity, through which should be reached:

- Creation and development of cross-border, national and regional infrastructure;
- Setting up of a favorable regional and local investments and socio-cultural environment;
- Usage of local, national and foreign resources;
- Increasing of the quality of the demographic resources;
- Realization of economic, social and cultural initiatives;
- Coordination of the sector policies and activities;
- Participation of nongovernmental organization.

The collaboration between the geographic and the economic volume of knowledge is put in because of the understanding that regional development may be viewed as a process of socio-economic and cultural-historical interaction, of redistribution of incomes and resources in different regions on the territory of the particular country, or the member-states of particular organizations and unions, the European Union for example.

Results

The economic accents in the development of a curriculum of the "Regional Development and Geo-economics" degree are in conformity with the logic of the processes of redistribution, accomplished with the help of different instruments and mechanisms, which they include:

- Interaction of different types of common structural policies, implemented by the state on the territory of particular region;
- Accomplished partnership between the institutions, working for the socio-economic prosperity of particular territorial community;
- Complex socio-economic policy, based on the economic and infrastructural development, and a definite system of regional economic mechanisms, balances, system of indicators, programs and projects, and regulating state agreements.

The curriculum, in conformity with the necessity of balance and relevance of the forms of the subjects, is constructed according to the conviction of the academic members about the nature of regional development and the territorial systems.

It is accepted as a conscious and purposeful activity of the regional community, therefore the formulation of any definition of regional development requires the defining of the term "development", considered as a condition, in which controlled by man factors lead to rational usage of resources in favor of the society.

In the development of the curriculum is required optimal provision of mutual commitment between the separate subjects and methodological chronology of the educational content, which provides modularity, harmony, logical sequence and continuity.

The fundamental, general theoretical and applied practical preparation, which provides integrative and interdisciplinary knowledge, students get through obligatory subjects, which are situated in the curriculum by semesters and years in logical sequence.

The built cause-and-effect relations between the theoretical and the practical applied disciplines give the ground for successful understanding and rationalization of the geographic image of the world. On this base, students can upgrade their knowledge on disciplines of the eligible and facultative block with regional focus and help the studying and the successful application of different policies on regional and local level.

On the basis of the deductive approach the construction of the plan follows the understanding of regional development as a condition in which controlled by man factors lead to the rational usage of the regionally differentiated natural, material, cultural, political, financial, demographic and other resources in favor of the larger part of the population on particular territory.

For part of the territories, however, the lack of enough resources is a basic problem, which imposes the including as an indicator for development the securing of the needed resources. It, for its part, requires the presence of subjects with extrapolative and applied-prognostic character.

In this sense the whole scientific-educational content of the thematic and the lecture "luggage" of the degree is subordinate to the comprehension that under regional development of the territorial systems we should understand the process of securing of the necessary conditions and resources for positive changes in the economic and social reality of limited territories as a consequence of new technological decisions and higher employment, aiming at increasing of the quality of life of the population in the form of socio-economic, cultural, health and socio-mental comfort.

Very important segment in the complex of subjects in the proposed curriculum is regional policy, explored through the prism of physical and social geography, of ecology and history, of politics and, of course, of geo-economics.

Proceeding from the axiomatic assumption that policy is an art of government, we think that it reflects the socio-economic and cultural relations that originated in society, furthermore it is their concrete expression. It is a system of strategies, approaches, methods and means of achievement of the determined goals for regional development of the territorial units.

The regional policy is conducted in cooperation between the local and the central authorities. This requires the stress in the disciplines to be put on complexes of legislative, executive, administrative and economic activities, directed to the general development and mostly to the economic regions by spatial, urbanization and administrative-territorial systems and units.

In the conditions of development of the international division of labor, of globalization and (sub)europeanization, of influence of the new key technologies and complex integration processes and relations, is changing the territorial structure of the economic and socio-cultural substratum of the space, the territorial organization of public production, which imposes consolidation of the necessity of application of the regional approach.

In the sphere of economic interrelations, which still have leading role, in geo-economic and politico-cultural aspect students should get to know the system of methods and ways of influence on the main processes, having important significance for the regional development:

- Regulation of the urbanization processes;
- Restriction of the migration;
- Acceleration and deepening of the integration;
- Activation of the participation in the international division of labor;
- Securing of the protection and recovering of environment;
- Effective and rational usage of the natural resources;
- Meeting of the interests of local, national and international governing bodies.

Of great significance for the reaching of the required competencies is the formation of skills for determining of the main directions for development and priorities in the socio-economic and cultural-historical sphere, which are part of the national and/or of other taxonomic level in regional development.

The assessment of the reached level of training and erudition related to the problems of regional development is connected with the skill of students to define:

- The degree of acquiring of the regional potential (natural, demographic, economic, socio-cultural, cultural-historical, geopolitical and others);
- The alternatives for regulation of the "narrow" places in the region;
- The internal for the region aims, strategies and tasks;
- The problems, whose solving is achieved on interregional level.

Relatively equivalent is the part in the curriculum, regarding the questions of geo-economics. As a science about the national economic strategies and world economy, it studies the competitiveness of regional economies, developing under the influence of the world integration processes and the demographic resources, the contemporary technologies and the increasing globalization of the way of living and culture of the separate regions.

This requires the including in the curriculum in "Regional Development and Geo-economics" of such disciplines and topics, treating the problems of international integration, national competitiveness and regional economic conditions, the influencing factors for globalization and regionaliza-

tion, its interrelation with geopolitics, strategies for economic development of the communication space under the influence of external and internal factors, connected with the living standard and social needs of society.

The logic of ordination and the thematic fixation of the geo-economic content in the curriculum chases the including of several aims:

1. Introduction to the new geo-economic world, to the contemporary geo-economic space, free orientation in the geo-economic sphere and discovering of new socio-economic horizons.
2. Tracing and revealing of the dialectic continuity in the process of adoption of the world economic space and its more and more dynamic interrelations with the geopolitical and military-strategic space.
3. Studying of the development of the geo-economic space according to "the coordinate system" of contemporary civilizations with a view to the observing of the laws of the contemporary civilizational development.

From here result the main tasks of geo-economics as a significant segment in the curriculum:

- Clarification of the role of geo-economics as a factor for global changes of primary importance, clarification of the content and main trends of cross-border geo-economic systems, the role and place of geo-economics in the process of formation of long-term doctrines for national development and the strategic arsenal for their realization;
- The formation of clear ideas of the main subjects of the world geo-economic process, and also of the main institutions, providing economic harmony in the conditions of global changes;
- Acquiring of skills for building of personal position on the question about the global economic process, the dynamics of the economic situation and taking of strategic decisions for overcoming of geo-economic, geo-financial and geostrategic problems.

As a result of the studying of the suggested content in the lecture courses in geo-economics, set as a system of ideas, concepts, and factual materials, students get to a new level of methodological thinking in the field of foreign economic interrelations – the spatial operation in global dimensions. The person who acquires the methodology of geo-economics is able to make a transition to the situational regulating and dynamical changing of the geo-economic picture.

The steps for reaching to this end product of competencies include:

- Introduction to the basic concepts and sources of origin of geo-economics as a component of the scientific strategy for development; with the new methodological preconditions for rationalization of the contemporary world, characterized by trends for formation of united world economic space, full of contradictions and compromises, conditioned by the processes of technogenic and psycho-geographic globalization and regional economic autarchy;
- Analysis of the regularities of the world economic systems, functioning within the frameworks of the postindustrial model of development;
- Analysis of the geo-economic spaces in the conditions of neo-economics (the "new" economics);
- Revelation of the logic of the geo-economic approach in the formation of the national strategy for development, the character of the national doctrines and concepts for interaction of the country/ countries with the rest of the world.

Conclusion

These and other considerations provoke the necessity of appearing of the "Regional Development and Geo-economics" degree at the "St. Cyril and St. Methodius" University of Veliko Tarnovo. Its functioning corresponds to the actuality of the contemporary economic, geopolitical, socio-cultural and historic-geographical processes directed toward the formation of united economic and cultural space in global scale and the concentration of the relations on regional and local governmental and applied level.

Appendix 1

Qualification characterization of "Bachelor" Educational-Qualification Degree.

The qualification characterization of the degree determines as **basic purpose** of its educational process the training of highly qualified specialists in regional development and geo-economics, having competencies, capabilities and ambitions for constant self-perfection, self-education and self-regulation, needed for the providing of adequate to the social necessities educational management and executive resource.

The education in the bachelor degree "Regional Development and Geo-economics" is directed to the acquiring of competencies by students in personal and professional aspect.

The getting of personal competencies presumes:

- The mastering of new knowledge and constant improving of qualification in the context of the ideas for continuing education;
- The making of particular scientific conclusions in the field of geography, geo-economics and regional development, based on empirical researches;
- Expressing of active civic attitude;
- Forming of personal qualities, connected with tolerance and empathy to the solving of geopolitical, socio-economic and ecologic problems on global and regional level;
- Showing of professional motivation and attitude toward the future profession;
- Development of analytic, constructive thinking and critical capability of observation through fast orientation, finding and evaluation or rejection of the ready models;
- Using of the contemporary information technologies;
- Formation of culture of communication and observance of universal values and ethic norms;
- Development of the capability of administrative management of sophisticated professional activities;
- Showing creativity and initiative in the management activity;
- Application of the skill of survival, self-evaluation and planning of the necessity of extension and actualization of the professional qualification.

The professional competencies presume the students to:

- Analyze and evaluate the natural resource potential, the demographic and economic potential of the administrative-territorial units of different ranks;
- Evaluate the contemporary condition of the settlement network and the infrastructure on national, regional and local level;

- Identify the problems of regional policy in Europe, the Balkan Peninsula and Bulgaria, and to formulate the priorities for their overcoming;
- Participate in development and realization of strategies, plans and programs for development on national, district, municipal and settlement level;
- Evaluate their knowledge and to identify needs for conscientiousness in the process of creation of the data base;
- Participate in management of regional projects in the environmental sphere and apply the conception of sustainable development;
- Take part in the coordination and administration of the activities in regional policy and local self-government;
- Work in teams in the process of development of geographic projects and projects in regional policy, in the conducting of field practices and presenting of the results.
- Plan, implement and estimate the results of scientific-applied and terrain researches, and participate in scientific forums.

Reference

- Dawkins, C. J. (2003). Regional Development Theory: Conceptual Foundations, Classic Works, and Recent Developments. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 18(2), 131-172.
- Glasson, J. and Marshall, T. (2007). *Regional Planning*. London: Routledge.
- Griffiths, A. and Wall, S. (2004). *Applied Economics*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Tulumović, V. (2015). Models of Regional Aspect and Development Underdeveloped Regions. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 8(40), 806-814.
- Winkler, A. (2012). Measuring regional inequality: an index of socio-economic pressure for Serbia. *Зборник радова - Географски факултет Универзитета у Београду*, 60, 81-102.
- Witherick, M., Ross, S. and Small, J. (2001). *A Modern Dictionary of Geography*. London: Arnold.
- Бујадиновић, С., Павловић, М. и Шабић, Д. (2010). Интегрални одрживи развој на примеру локалне географске средине. *Гласник Српског географског друштва*, 90(2), 173-187.

- Живковић, Љ. и Јовановић, С. (2006). Реализација облика и метода рада употребом компјутера у настави географије. *Зборник радова - Географски факултет Универзитета у Београду*, 54, 249-260.
- Живковић, Љ. и Јовановић, С. (2011). Еколошко образовање и настава географије у основној школи. *Зборник радова - Географски факултет Универзитета у Београду*, 59, 255-280.
- Јовановић, С. и Живковић, Љ. (2007). Улога домаћих задатака у настави географије. *Зборник радова - Географски факултет Универзитета у Београду*, 55, 185-192.
- Павловић, М. и Шабић, Д. (2006). Регионални приступ и типови регионалне диференцијације територије, *Зборник радова - Географски факултет Универзитета у Београду*, 54, 205-218.
- Тошић Д., (2012). *Принципи регионализације*. Београд: Географски факултет Универзитета у Београду.
- Шабић, Д. и Павловић, М. (2007). Регионална свест и регионални идентитет, *Зборник радова - Географски факултет Универзитета у Београду*, 55, 205-212.