

THE GENERAL CONTEXTUAL FRAME FOR PLACING SUPERIOR STUDIES GRADUATES IN THE WORK MARKET

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ABSTRACT: *Integration in a workplace is an interaction rapport between the individual and the environment. The process of professional integration is strongly linked to the professional aspiration, individual expectations, motivation, and work satisfaction. Placing young graduates of superior studies on the labour market is a challenge for contemporary society. Identifying a suitable work place as well as the certainty of the attained work place are very important elements for young superior studies graduates in the current context of economic crisis. The difficulties in getting a job for superior studies graduates are most frequently associated with lacks in what regards the speciality practical skills and generally, insertion in the work market is achieved by getting a position in fields that are related or even different from the speciality field. In an extremely unstable social and economic context, people's ability to quickly adapt to the requirements of the labour market is fundamental. In this respect, education and professional training have an important role, contributing to the update of knowledge, skills and qualifications of superior studies graduates or future superior studies graduates, eventually allowing them to stay active, flexible, adapted to the situations and requirements of the labour market.*

KEY WORDS: *work integration, professional placing, superior studies graduate, labour market.*

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1. THE PROCESS OF PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Work has been into the attention of men of science for a very long time, the right to work having been recognized as one of the fundamental human rights, but the practical application of this right is deficitary (Preda, 1998, p.53).

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By work integration we understand „a complex, leveled social process, of the person that integrates and the integrating environment, which results in the young graduate's acceptance, internalizing, and fulfilment of the value and normative requirements of the integrating environment” (Zamfir & Vlăsceanu, 1998, p.439).

Work aspirations, as a factor of the integration process, express the finality of human action, the fundamental values towards which the individual strives, and based on which he assesses the ensemble of his achievements. Work integration is not a mechanic rapport of interaction between the individual and the environment. It is not enough for the individual, through his work ability, to correspond to the characteristics and requirements of the integrating environment, in respect to his integration in the labour market. It is necessary that he reacts to these characteristics and requirements with the desire to act according to the values and norms of the integrating environment.

So, his aspirations must head towards these values and norms and effectively adhere to them, which is to understand them in the meaning they have for himself. The individual rapport to the integrating environment differentially, in rapport to his aspirations. In the same integrating environment, people can evolve differently, as a result of their individualised aspirations. Based on what they are „searching” for in this environment, they will or will not find aspects that can fulfil their aspirations, and, according to these, integrate or not in the work field.

In the opinion of Lefter and Manolescu (1985, pp. 29-38), work aspirations are determined by a group of important factors, out of which the most important, stressed by the authors, are: personal necessities (related to life necessities that the individual seeks to satisfy, requirements related not only to his life, but also of those he supports, reason for which knowing the family situation has an important role in understanding the aspirations); age and sex; acquired achievements (as it is known that aspirations make the individual strive for objectives he hasn't accomplished yet, but which are linked to the status he has; the values to which he subscribes (based on which he hierarchizes and selects these necessities, gives them meaning and elaborates his action preferences).

Knowing these aspirations gives us not only an explanation of the situation, but also the possibility of preventive practical intervention, as understanding what the members of the collective desire, we can intervene to create such life and work conditions that stimulate integration, avoid conflicts, frustrations and other aspects that can lead to disintegration. Another important factor of the work integration process is expectations. Thus, „expectation refers to the individual's belief about the possibility or subjective probability that a collective behaviour will be followed by a certain result and it is the easiest to think about, as a judgment of particular probability” (Ivancevich, et al., 2008, p.134).

The professional integration process is in close relation to work satisfaction. Research regarding work satisfaction show the direct rapport that this has with work integration. Work satisfaction determines the successful fulfilment of the work tasks, receptivity to the general problems of the institution or organization, stability of the work force, the desire for professional perfecting, whereas, at the opposite, work dissatisfaction can generate lack of interest for work, passivity, the desire to change

profession, the desire for fluctuation and other such effects with negative repercussions both for the individual and for the organizational environment.

In this respect, Chambart Lauwe considers that work motivation is defined as “the orientation towards a purpose of the volitional actions of the individual, in this respect, motivation gives answer to the question Why?” (1972, p. 225). So, we can conclude that in the work integration process, work motivation constitutes an extremely important factor for the individual.

Hoffman (1996) considers that different motivations can generate the same aspiration, but also that different aspirations can have the same motivation (the motivation of earning can generate the aspiration to promotion, to have an easy and safe work place), the author thus including in the concept of motivation heterogeneous elements. „In the motivation spectrum, besides needs or necessities, other reasons are included (aspirations, attitudes, expectations, interests, purposes etc), these are specific both for each type of activity, being distinct from the motivation of work and creation, and for each person” (Hoffman, 1996, p.70).

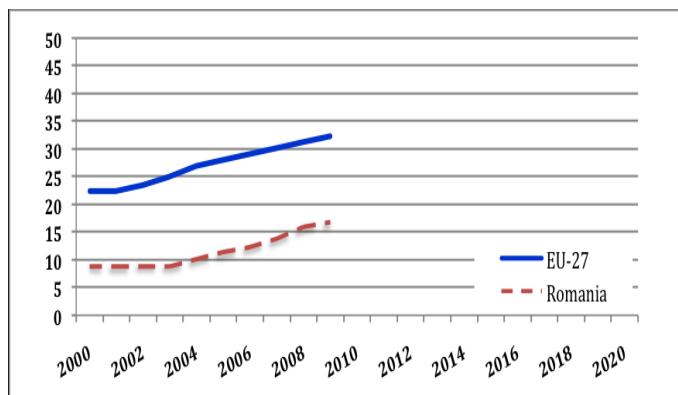
A few characteristics of motivation can be acknowledged, among which different authors include: the persistence which characterizes the strength to maintain a motivation for as long as a person continues to make efforts in order to fulfil his objectives; the direction, which expresses what the individual chooses to obtain, or for what reason he elaborates a behaviour or another (gain, prestige, safety, health, to make something good in life, etc), this characteristic is directly linked to the axiological base of motivation and represents the mechanism that triggers aspirations: intensity, referring to the strength through which motivation acts regarding its practical capacity to generate an individual’s behaviour, hierarchy (rank), takes into consideration the place of a motivation in respect to the motivational system of an individual, the priority that it is given in the elaboration process of personal behaviours.

The integration process must be led based on a solid knowledge of its particularities, owing to the fact that integration implies interaction-type social relations, it is necessary that the process is not allowed to take place spontaneously. As was shown, both the person integrated and the integrating environment play an active role, a reciprocal change of influences taking place (mentalities, aspirations, behaviours). Relations within the integrating environment play an important role in the direction of the course of the process of work integration. The individual’s integration depends on the collective’s force, on its power of influence and on its quality. The degree of work integration directly influences the affective, cognitive and axiologic dimension of the individual, it repercutates on his life. The better an individual is integrated in work, the greater the satisfaction he will find in the activity that he undertakes.

2. THE GRADUATES’ INTEGRATION IN THE WORK MARKET. GENERALITIES

Beginning with the year 2000, in Romania, there was a significant decrease in the number of persons that drop out of the educational system, achieving a low education level. The value of this indicator for 2009 is close to the European average

(EU 27 – 14.4%; RO – 16.6%, v. figure 1) (Vamanu, 2012, p. 21). The reduction of the rate of early dropping out of the education and formation system is also formulated as an objective in the Fiscal – Bugetary Strategy on medium term of Romania.



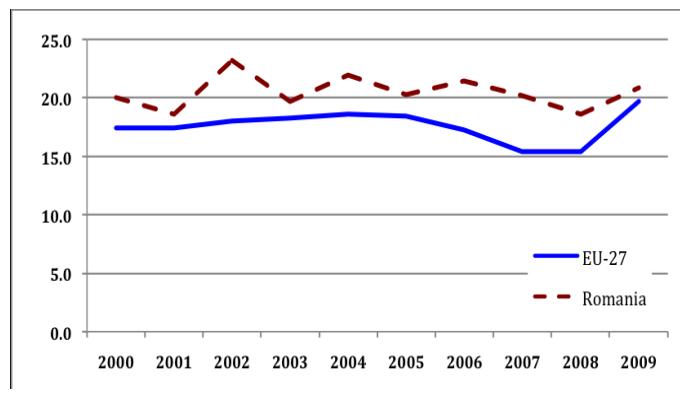
Source: Eurostat, 2008. Note: indicator calculated as a percentage of persons with superior studies from the total population aged between 30 and 34.

Figure 1. Rate of graduates of superior studies

The low participation of the youth and of vulnerable groups on the work market was and is seen as one of the main short and medium term challenges by the current National Strategy Regarding Social Protection Social Inclusion. In the past, measures taken in this respect have been directed to subsidize employers in order to employ graduates of schooling institutions (for example, in 2007, 12.182 persons were hired, out of which 1.624 graduates of the inferior cycle of highschool or schools of arts and crafts; 5.412 graduates of secondary superior schooling or post-highschool schooling; 5.146 graduates of superior studies).

Between 2007-2013, in our country The National Development Plan 2007 – 2013, (NDP), proposed by the Government of Romania stated that the problem of integrating young people in the work market as one of the action priorities, as a result of the increase of the rate of unemployment among them. The Government's document emphasised the integration of young people on the work market in close relation to the education's system ability to offer relevant competences and qualifications and to adapt to the requirements of the market. Moreover, the government has set as an objective the achievement of some targets until 2015 for a series of indicators regarding the integration of young people in the labour market.

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Source: Eurostat, 2008

Figure 2. The rate of unemployment among young people (15 – 24 years of age)

Moreover, the government has set as an objective the achievement of some targets until 2015 for a series of indicators regarding the integration of young people on the work market. The fulfilment of the objectives in the NDP regarding young people's integration in the labour market was and is delayed due to the ongoing reform of the Romanian Education system and in the last years, even worse by the economic crisis. Or example, in 2009, the providing of funds necessary to funding the active measure that stipulates the employing of certain categories (young graduates, unemployed persons < 45 years of age) was badly damaged by the economic crisis. The necessary funds were not allocated from the national budget to the employment agencies, or, in the best cases, in some counties, they were allocated for a few months (Stănculescu, 2009). Also, from the following graphic it can be observed that the unemployment rate among young people between 15-24 in Romania is higher than the rate of unemployment among young people between 15-24 in the European Union.



Source: Government of Romania, The National Development Plan 2007-2013

Figure 3. The value of projects aimed at young people, financed through POSDRU

The interest for the problem of the inclusion of young people is also reflected by the degree of accessing European funding. The list of funding from Structural Funds

is available on the site of Authority for the Coordination of Structural Instruments (www.fonduri-ue.ro). Figure 3 illustrates the value of the projects that reach young people financed through POSDRU. It shows the percentage that is related to the plans and projects that are aimed at young people and their inclusion on the work market from the totality of the projects elaborated by The Operational Sectorial Programme for the Development of Human Resources. Unfortunately, only 17% of this programme were aimed for the development of these projects, the remaining percentage representing other social programmes, like „The Transition from school to active life”, „Doctorate programmes”, etc. (Government of Romania, The National development Plan, 2008).

3. THE EXPECTATIONS OF YOUNG GRADUATES FROM THE LABOUR MARKET

The expectations that young graduates have from the work market differ significantly, according to previous experience in the work market. The young people that have not had experiences in the work market project the work place that they will have at a given time as a sum of their expectations. Likewise, the young people that have already joined the work market, before having direct interaction with a workplace, had unrealistic projections and expectations. They all agree that, as result of this interaction, their expectations have changed, adapting to what the work market can really offer.

In the subjective evaluation of the work place that young people have or that they wish to have, they are taking into consideration criteria like: the stability of the work place, psychological stress, remuneration, independence in taking decision, intrinsic motivation, and promotion opportunities. In the opinion of a number of 12 young superior studies graduates, that participated as respondents in a focus group brought together in the event of an analysis that looked at general aspects of the insertion of superior studies graduates in the labour market, the labour force market and the absorption of graduates in the labour market constitute, in their opinion, a major part of existence. „The work place must offer, in their opinion, fulfilment and material safety: decent wage, meal tickets, telephone, a job car, payed extra hours, and the respect of individual values: the respect for the person and for the work done, acknowledgment, appreciation, promoting, correctitude, colegiality” (Vamanu, 2012).

“I should feel respected at my work place, to enjoy what I do and feel well, and to be able to evolve in this perspective. The salary is important and it should be at least high enough for me to cover my expenses and live decently” (G., 24 years old, superior studies graduate, Petroșani). The situation changes when the experience that the employees have had at different work places comes into discussion. The young people agree that most often, the expectations and projections that they had made before they began working were not met, even more so, they had to reevaluate these expectations, taking into consideration the realities of the work market. The interaction with the work market made the young people appreciate more the relationships with their colleagues and bosses at the work place, the way they are respected or the surplus value that they bring through their work.

The current economic context and the situation in the work market determines young graduates that are hired to be satisfied with the work place they have, even though it does not meet their expectations and conditions. Young graduates are of the opinion that things are going for the worse, and the economic crisis favorize the context in which they have to accept the compromise situations at the work place: lack of criteria for performance and competence, their studies not being taken into consideration and the irrelevance of acquired knowledge, the job description and the conditions in the work contract not being taken into account, extra hours not payed, not correlating the wage with the volume of work done, not observing the work safety conditions etc.

“These days, you don’t raise the problem if you like your job or you don’t, you’re just glad that you have a job, and that you get some money from somewhere” (A., 23 years old, young graduate of superior studies, Vulcan) (Vamanu, 2012). “There is no certainty about your job, even if you are competent, hiring is not done taking into consideration competence criteria, studies, experience, but through relations” (C., 27 years old, superior studies graduate, unemployed, Petroșani) (Vamanu, 2012).

The certainty of the work place, one of the very important conditions for young employees is put in jeopardy in the current context of economic crisis. Losing the job is one of their main fears, in the context in which the offer for a work place is greatly reduced compared to the moment when they joined the labour market.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

In what regards the labour force market and the employment possibilities that young graduates of superior studies have nowadays, whether we look from the perspective of the young graduates that are not yet hired, or from the perspective of the ones that work, the unanimously accepted opinion is that the offer from the work market is more and more deficitary. If, at a structural level, the labour force market with the fluctuations caused by the economic crisis offers the same conditions (few work places, small wages, uncertainty etc.) in what regards employment for all the young people, individually, the difficulties in finding a job are closely linked to the experience that they have in the work market. Thus, in the opinion of young superior studies graduates employment in the labour market is difficult.

“It is very difficult to find a job, especially because the education system in Romania doesn’t help at all, as it emphasizes theory too much and practice too little, in a time when every employer asks for experience” (A., 22 years old, graduate of superior studies, employed, Lupeni) (Vamanu, 2012). “You can’t really find a job according to the training you have because of the poverty of the offer on the labour market at this time, at a local level, and because of nepotism” (T., 23 years old, superior studies graduate, in search of a job, Petroșani) (Vamanu, 2012).

Identifying work places for young people is limited by the apparition of age groups that include more people on the labour force market, on one hand, and on the other hand, by a lasting economic crisis. The narrowing of the demand for labour force puts the people that wish to work in a situation that is even more difficult than those that have already had a work place. The exclusion of the new generation from the

inclusion in the labour force has long term social and political dangers and its moral effects are extremely harmful. It is hard to understand that the years spent in school were useless, as the acquired knowledge is no longer necessary. The fundamental cause is the degree of qualification of the young people that begin their career and which is not higher, but lower than that of the employed persons (Lefter & Manolescu, 2009, p.108).

In an extremely unstable social and economical context, the individuals' ability to quickly adapt to the requirements of the labour market is fundamental. Thus, an important role is played by education and professional training, contributing to the updating of knowledge, competences and qualifications of the employees that are superior studies graduates or of future employees that are superior studies graduates, eventually allowing them to stay active, flexible, adapted to the situations and requirements of the work market.

The difficulties in occupying the jobs are most frequently associated with lacks in what regards the speciality and general practical abilities, but also in what regards responsibility, not unfrequently, the insertion in the labour market is done by occupying jobs in domains that are connected or even different from the speciality domain. Taking into consideration the reduced mobility of the labour force in the region, one can expect that at least a part of these young graduates will continue their careers in different fields of activity.

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