

THE STUDIES – OCCUPATION BOND IN THE CONTEXT OF PROFESSION DIVERSIFICATION ON THE LABOUR MARKET

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Abstract: The correlation between education and labour market is a subject of high interest, but insufficiently researched, and most of all, not widely practiced. The severity of financial crisis adds a high degree of uncertainty about the future of global economy and European policies should be designed to increase occupancy by improving human capital by upgrading skills and abilities that the new context of European labour market requires. Improving skills is very important to maintain equality in the workplace, because people who have low skills are the most vulnerable on the labor market and will be the first to know the impact of an economic crisis, similar to that currently taking place worldwide. In a society where everything changes fast and there is a continuous need for new competencies and knowledge, the educational system cannot provide the individual the competence which is necessary throughout his life. The changes occurring in a society require the improvement of human capital that is going to have different abilities and skills from now on.

Keywords: professions, education, labour market, skills, economic recession.

1. THE DEFINITION OF OCCUPATIONS AND PROFESSIONS

The occupation¹ represents the helpful activity, bringer of income as money or other form, which a person conducts in a socio-economic facility and that represents the source of income for the given person. “One and the same person can practice more occupations. In sociological literature an increased interest is given to the analysis of the situations of people with double occupational status, like working-farmer. Gradually, during history, on the foundation of social division of work, a complex structure of occupations was created, moving from basic

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¹ For more details, see *Micul dicționar academic*, Bucharest, Univers Enciclopedic Publishing, 2003, *passim*.

activities, which were the same, and provided personal living, to a specialized work. The deeper the work got divided, the more efficient it became. This led to a quicker progress of the society, but also to the development of interrelationships between producers, meaning a complex occupational structure”².

The profession means “the specialty or the job a person obtains after crossing a period of training, in which the study and the practice have variable relation. In other words, the profession the professional profile of a person socially recognized”³. In other specialty paper works, the profession is defined as being “a learned activity, for example in school, so it implies training, but in a specific intellectual context”. Being in a profession means being certified, by someone who does it, or a defined structure among the profession. Also, a profession requires an amount of social responsibility”⁴.

The bond between the profession and occupation is a special one and it has some features that need to be well recognized:

- “it is obvious that the social and economic life is more dynamic than the institutional system. It is clear, that the variety of occupations that took form in the unceasing movement of the socio-economic background outruns the list of professions that they project and this sum up the profile institutions;

- if real life takes care of the adaptation needs by creating new occupations, the responsible system for human resources and work force is slower. We can easily understand the period of years needed for projecting new professions and study plans, of placing every detail of adequate educational programs, time tables and training of trainers etc. The renewal of professions grows faster and faster, subjecting the school technology to pressures that aim the adaptation limits of the traditional type school;

- maintaining a normative framework in the occupational economy is a basic condition in the improvement of all kind of situations”⁵.

2. THE PROFESSION TYPOLOGY

In some specialty paper works of the work sociology, the professions can be classified in more types:

- “the penetration professions, that initiate the main directions of development, that shape the future accessible and desirable, the spearhead in

² Cătălin Zamfir, Lazăr Vlăsceanu (eds.), *Dicționar de sociologie*, Bucharest, Babel Publishing, 1997, p. 347.

³ Ion Schileru, *Abordări noi în domeniul economiei ocupaționale*, available at www.ase.ro/upcpr/profesori/367/Ocupatii%20final.doc, accessed at: 2 April 2015.

⁴ Daniel Bell, *Societatea post-industrială (The coming of post-industrial society)*, New York, Basic Books Inc, 1973, p. 374.

⁵ Ion Schileru, *op. cit.*, available online at the following address: <http://www.ase.ro/upcpr/profesori/367/Ocupatii%20final.doc>, accessed at: 2 April 2015.

professional structure. They need an advanced training, in a wide time perspective, starting with the training of teachers that will be called to prepare the penetrations;

– the support professions, shape the entire range of those who take, as beneficiaries, the innovation and ensure its using. This type of profession creates the possibility of changing and modernization of the social economics, offering the productive consumption in the economic cycle, a *market* for what the two first groups make.

– the overcome professions, are those *areas* of the structure that are left behind under the aspect of their correspondence regarding the general modernization of work. Leaving some professions behind creates some jams in the evolution of the whole professional structure and the development of the entire society”⁶.

3. NEW PROFESSIONS AND OCCUPATIONS IN ROMANIA

Nowadays, work is no longer seen as an activity meant only for the adults, that have work contracts for 30 or 40 years, and that work in a certain field for the entire life, same as the learning period. If learning is divided in three categories – formal, non-formal and informal – then work is also divided in three types: monetized, monetary and non-monetized. Because of the strong development of the information technology and that of the communication, the person that works is no longer the one that needs to be at the office, in a company but a person that uses a computer in his or her activity. The same thing happens to the person that studies, that is no longer seen as a child or a teenager that takes notes from a desk using pencils and notebooks.

The changes in the occupation area were determined, first of all by the evolution of technology. Therefore, after the technology boost, some occupations in some activity fields have disappeared or have been reduced. At the same time activities that did not exist before were created, new occupations and new requests on the labour market.

According to a study made by GFK Romania in the year 2010, in 19 countries, it is revealed that Romanians started to favor those professions that were seen in a good light before 1989, and provided a stable work place and a financial guarantee. So, according to the GFK Trust Index 2010, in the top of the best occupations were: firefighter (91%), mailman (89%) , military job (88%), teacher, priest (86%), doctor (74%). At the opposite position, the worst seen jobs, even though they could offer income, are seen as unstable on a period of time: politician (11%), banker (28%), company manager (39%), lawyer, judge (42%), marketing specialist (46%)⁷.

⁶ Oscar Hoffman, *Sociologia muncii*, Bucharest, Hyperion Publishing, 1996, p. 118-119.

⁷ The study *GFK Trust Index 2010* is available online at the following address: http://www.gfk-ro.com/public_relations/press/multiple_pg/006084/index.ro.html, accessed at: 12 April 2015.

4. THE STUDY-OCCUPATION RELATION

In the specialty literature it is stated the fact that there is a weak connection between studies and occupation⁸. Often, companies pay more respect to the level of education than the domain of the studies and, therefore they produce local differences among the work force requirement and the offer of graduates in a certain domain. The occupation options are not only determined by money, since workers choose their work place based on individual criteria or sex, race and the social environment which they come from⁹.

There is still a certain inaction and stiffness of the education system which makes that the changes in the labour market to be a step ahead; worse is that the education system does not succeed to be appropriate for the actual level of economy. On the whole, the source of creating new jobs comes from the private sector and less from the public sector.

From this perspective, educational policies in Romania should be oriented more to meet the dynamics and changes occurring in the labour market. Another solution for diminishing the “rift” between labour market and education can be the inclusion of part time activities in the higher education system. First of all it will allow students to gain experience in a certain field while studying giving them the possibility of combining work and practice. Secondly, by developing activities for a short period of time, the students will have the chance of covering the expenses of their studies.

Lots of studies regarding education and occupation are focused on the place that university education is. In France, the connections between studies and occupation were analyzed by S. Dumartin and O. Chardon¹⁰. The analysis of the role study plays in obtaining a job that is life lasting requires other research on human capital aspects. The notion of human capital refers to “those abilities of people that are the same in any social background. Mainly, the human capital is formed from educational capital and biological capital (physical abilities, mainly represented by their state of health)”¹¹.

Education represents one of the most important pylons of the European social model (which promotes especially “the society of knowledge”). Each year more than a million European citizens participate in communitary programs regarding education, professional development and active citizenship. The most important things that the european education system must achive are: improvement of the

⁸ Jean-Francois Giret, Alberto Lopez, José Rose, *Des formations pour quels emplois?*, Editions La Decouverte, Paris, 2005, *passim*.

⁹ Ichiro Tsukahara, *The effect of family background on occupational choice*, in “Labour”, vol. 21, Issue 4/5, 2007, p. 871-890

¹⁰ Seamus Mc. Guinness, *Overeducation in the labour market*, in “Journal of Economic Surveys”, vol. 20, Issue 3, 2006, p. 387-418.

¹¹ See Bogdan Voicu, *Capitalul uman: componente, niveluri, structuri. România în context european*, in “Calitatea vieții”, no. 1-2/2004.

educational systems, making sure that everybody has access to education, and to make the educational system more open to the society.

The low correlation of the educational offer from the vocational, secondary and higher education can be explained by the low level of involvement of social partners in the making of the educational activities, absence of systematic studies of prospecting and forecasting of the labour market, poor development insertion monitoring systems and partnerships between a school/university and an enterprise. Regarding professional formation the offer tends to focus on general skills development programs, particularly for people, not for the employers, focusing on specific requests of the labour market.

We can say that the “break” that occurs between the two areas is generated, on one hand by the fact that higher educational institutions do not have an operational institutional autonomy, and on the other hand the labour market is not open in full partnership with the educational system. Many employers do not take into account the competencies that a graduate has formed during his studies and prefer to form and provide for him training at the work place, a solution involving high financial costs.

Being only a part of the work force, the formal learning does not represent a big factor in choosing an occupation or changing it. Many employees improve their human capital after graduating from formal education, mainly through experience from their work place (learning by doing) and professional training. Regarding the training, economists distinguish two types: the general training and the specific training¹². The general training increases the productivity of a person for all jobs, meanwhile the specific one increases it only in a certain field.

At the same time with the development of the globalization process in Europe some changes started happening in the social classes. So, the class of “blue collars”, the one of which Karl Marx said it is “the universal class” begun to drop down, after the decreasing number of industry workers. At the same time, the middle class became different a lot “meanwhile the upper class of land owners almost disappeared. New occupational divisions started to appear, based on the social and technological changes regarding the services basic economy”¹³.

At the end of the 20th century, the image of the worker was overcome by new European realities. The strong rising of employees brought changes not only in the market structure, but also at the level of the employee worker”. If at the start of the century, in Europe and North America, there were millions of workers in mining, metallurgy, naval and steel industry, nowadays, in developed countries in this domains there is only a fragment of the workers from the past”. The new technologies improve the production process and change the way people work, for example multiple tasks begun, like team work, and the work force demand grows

¹² On the human capital, see Gary Becker, *Capitalul uman. O analiză teoretică și empirică cu privire la educație*, Bucharest, All Publishing, 1997, *passim*.

¹³ Anthony Giddens, *Europa în noua epocă globală*, Bucharest, Ziu Publishing, 2007, p. 98.

bigger and bigger. Over the last decades the companies grew their activity outside borders, therefore trade became international. Also, the aging of population will have some effects on the work force, on professional skills, on the way people work and on the demands of new jobs in some activity fields, like health and social protection, making room for new careers¹⁴.

It is a must for young ones and adults to have that general knowledge that will help them adjust to the change. Over their life, students and employees will have to develop their skills in a certain activity field that will help them reach perfection every time in that domain.

The development of skills ensures a greater level of employment on long term, and can bring new opportunities for a better job and a bigger pay check. The worker skills play an important part in obtaining a great satisfaction towards the work they do and are vital for the rising of active citizens.

For the employers, the development of skills represents a way to increase the motivation, satisfaction and productivity of their workers. In the United States of America there is an old tradition of forecasting the occupations. The statistics bureau of labour from U.S.A. has done a forecast of occupations up until the year 2016, and the conclusions they reached are:

- An increased work force in a slower rhythm than the past decades
- An aging work force
- A rising service field
- A rate of productivity increase of 2,4% each year¹⁵.

By the end of the 20th century, after the demographic aging phenomenon and as a solution for striking poverty, work became a priority in the work force occupation, but also for a person that has a decent job has more chances of reaching out from poverty¹⁶.

5. THE ENHANCEMENT OF SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Skills represent the abilities to use your knowledge and know-how to perform a certain task or to take care of a problem, regardless we are talking of a professional context or a study, or one about personal or social life. The work force highly qualified helps develop the economy in any state, so it brings benefits both to the employees and employers.

The boost of skills is very important to maintain a balance at the work place, because people with reduced skills are vulnerable on the work force market and can be the first to meet the impact of an economic crisis, similar to the one happening right now at global level.

¹⁴ Ute Frevert, H.G. Haupt, *Omul secolului XX*, Iași, Polirom Publishing, 2002 p. 19.

¹⁵ James Franklin, *An overview of BLS Projections to 2016*, in *Monthly Labour Review*, November 2007, available at www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2007/11/mlr200711.pdf, accessed at: 23 April 2015.

¹⁶ Anthony Giddens, *Europa în epoca globală*, Bucharest, Ziua Publishing, 2007, p. 37.

But, perfecting skills is a must for all the people, not only for those with a lower qualification level. These last ones are those who participate less at the training drying their lives; also, now, far less projects are made at a European level, that aim the development of the skills that an aging population has.

Education, professional training and the occupation politics of the countries in the EU must be focused on adapting the skills to all study levels, on the increasing work force that has high qualification and that responds to the needs of a society that is always changing. Improving education in the EU is essential to avoid the waste of financial and human resources.

Skills perfecting must be a process that has to take in consideration some differences of gender and the fact that despite any European efforts, we still have areas where gender discrimination still exists. The research of living conditions at European level point out that a third of the men (36%) and a third of the women (33%) believe superior skills to the ones they offer; 15% men and 13% women consider that they need more training¹⁷.

The revolution of informational techniques causes the disparition of a high number of jobs, that not long ago were a part of our society, meantime new work places that this revolutions makes need a wide set of skills. So, the relation between skills and jobs becomes more and more difficult. The economic evolution and the technology increase the problem of skills inadequacy¹⁸.

It is not enough that economy possesses a number of good workers, even though this demand is very important for the economic rise of a country.

According to a study made by CEDEFOP, by the year 2020, almost all the new jobs that will be created in the next decade will require a high level of training, and almost 34% of the active population will have that kind of training. A good balance between the demand and the offer of work results out of the fact that workers have places well adapted to their skills. In the future there is a chance that labour market meets a surplus of some competencies. For example, there may be a risk that a person that has an academic qualification not to obtain a place of work, just because the employer seeks some skills that he or she does not have¹⁹.

In the table below, are presented some of the most important forms under we can analyze the inadequacy of skills:

¹⁷ European Commission, *Efficiency and Equity in Education and Training Systems*, Press Release, 8th August 2006.

¹⁸ Cedefop, *Skill supply and demand in Europa: medium-term forecast up to 2020*, available at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/15540.aspx>, accessed at: 13 April 2015.

¹⁹ Cedefop, *The skill matching challenge – analysing skill mismatch and policy implications*, available at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/15275.aspx>, accessed at: 23 April 2015.

Type of inadequacy	Description
Over-education	An individual that has more years of study than the job requires.
Under-education	An individual that has less years of education than the job requires.
Over-qualification	An individual with a higher level of education than the job requires.
Under-qualification	An individual with a lower level of education than the job requires.
Over-skilled	An individual cannot use all of his skills at his job.
Under-skilled	An individual does not possess the skills that involve a professional activity in a satisfying way.
Penury of skills	The need of certain skills is superior to the offer of available workers, that have this skills.
Surplus of skills	The need of certain skills is inferior to the offer of available workers, that have this skills.
Lack of skills	Either the level of skills a worker has is inferior to the level demanded in order to make an activity in a satisfying way, or the type of skills does not match the work place.
The economic damage of skills	The skills required previously are no longer demanded.
The technical damage	The physical and mental skills deteriorate because of an "atrophy".
Vertical inadequacy	The level of education or skills is far more higher or far more lower than the one demanded.
Horizontal inadequacy	The level of education or skills are adapted to the job, but the type of education is not.
Agglomeration/Down grading	The more qualified individuals have jobs meant for less qualified workers, this resulting in pushing the last ones away from available jobs for their level. "The downgrade" is the process in which less qualified workers are "pushed down", occupying jobs at a much lower level.

Source: Cedefop, *Skills mismatch in Europe*, June 2010, www.cedefop.europa.eu

The type of inconsistency varies depending the categories of people they refer to. For example, the skills of older workers are more technically used, because aging can damage the skills and the physical and mental competences. Young workers, being new on the labour market, are the subject of many types of differences, because their high level of education comes with a lack of experience.

CONCLUSIONS

The inadequacy to the labour market can contribute to the rising of the unemployment and to the decrease of productivity and economic competence. This inadequacy, that became a analysis subject and research for many economists and sociologists can come under many forms: from the lack of skills to some situations in which the knowledge of a person are superior to the demanding of a work place. In times of economic development, skill inadequacy takes place first of all because there are not enough persons that possess a certain type of skills to satisfy the request. For example, at the end of the year 1990, in the time of the economic boom, created by the golden age of the internet ("the explosion" of websites, known under the name of *dot.com bubble*), employers found it hard to recruit people with experience in the information technology. During the crisis, there is more likely that people with higher qualifications to have jobs that are at an inferior level. Even though this situation can bring advantages to the employers, they are only short term, because the employers have discontentment feelings regarding the job, and the productivity of the work can drop low.