

OPPORTUNITIES FOR HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT BY PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION / REINTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT: *The present paper presents some opportunities for the development of human resources by means of professional insertion / reinsertion. It is about an intervention project, more precisely the establishment of a Centre for Career Counselling and Professional Requalification (CORP) within the University "Eftimie Murgu" of Reșița. The objective was the promotion of an inclusive society able to facilitate the access and integration on the labour market of the young unemployed. By its activities, the project forwards an inclusive model of social inclusion of the professionally inactive young people through individualised programmes of qualification - requalification, support and professional counselling. By its results the project contributed to the stimulation of the participation of young unemployed persons to the social, economic and educational life, the consideration of the importance of the role played by education and professional training among the youth.*

KEY WORDS: *human resources development; professional integration; intervention project; opportunities; research.*

JEL CLASIFICATION: *I21; I23; I25; J60.*

1. INTRODUCERE

Important changes are taking place on the labour market (regarding the labour status, structural and occupational modifications) in the countries in transition to market economy, which exhibit certain particularities generated by the structure of economy, economic performances and potential, training degree and opportunities for labour force improvement. The transition of Romanian economy includes also the organisation of an appropriate labour market, an extremely complex and difficult process, as the labour market is the most imperfect of all, which imposes adequate measures in the economic policy to ensure its normal functioning (Cojocaru, 2003, p. 604). Labour market is a heterogeneous ensemble, made of labour markets

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individualised down to each trade or specialisation, which operate distinctly and may influence each other by professional re-qualifications (Pert, 2002, p. 33).

2. PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT – ESSENTIAL FACTOR OF THE PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION PHENOMENON

Taking into account that professional training, qualification, requalification and improvement are essential factors for the phenomenon of professional integration - reintegration and of the reduction of the vulnerability to unemployment, the institutions with attributions in the field of the social protection of the unemployed should intervene for: supporting and maintaining the competencies affected by their long-term unemployment, qualification of active persons without professional competencies, re-qualification of active persons in accordance with the needs of the economic agents or their desire, their adapting to the labour market requirements (Maniac, 1998, p. 104).

An important contribution to the reaching of these objectives is brought by practising certain forms of improvement such as: *poly-qualification*, which results in getting a qualification adjacent or complementary to the basic specialisation, whereas the labour force may be used more efficiently, both from the individual viewpoint and from the perspective of the performances of the group they belong to; *re-qualification*, which consists in modifying or acquiring new professional skills and competencies, with subjective causes (individual's re-evaluation of his professional option, failure to adapt or integrate in the acquired profession) and objective causes, such as modernisation of manufacture, of its organisation forces under the impact of technologisation, automation, accented moral wear and tear of certain professions leading to their disappearance and replacement with new ones, amplification of competition among work teams, individuals, unemployment); professional recycling, focussed on the maintaining of professional competencies at the performance standards imposed by the continuous technical and scientific progress. By making appeal to these forms of professional improvement, the employed individuals will succeed in maintaining their present social status, in heightening their social and professional prestige and in manifesting a flexible and creative behaviour, in line with the increasingly higher requirements imposed by the scientific process and permanent restructuring of the economic and social system. Both economic agents and labour force suppliers are interested in solving the problems related to professional training, qualification, re-qualification and improvement in order to meet employers' requirements. But in fact it is rare that demand is in accordance with supply when it comes to labour force. Specialised studies have highlighted the fact that the relation between education and labour force is at the origin of the correction operations or dys-functionalities in the labour demand – supply relations, combined with the dynamics of professions and the behaviour or preferences of demand and supply, as well as social-economic crises. The system of “given qualifications” (acquired through the training system) is also a regulator of the labour market, beside the system of “professional reconversion depending on the market requirements”. The latter attempts to solve dysfunctions and to increase thus the opportunities of the labour force offers, with

qualifications that are precarious or non-conform with the market requirements, when it comes to finding a job (Cojocaru, 2000, pp. 142-146).

Professional reconversion should take place on the basis of a local market study, aiming at: comparing the qualifications of employees with those of the unemployed, comparing the qualifications existing on the market with the requirements of economic agents at a given moment and the qualifications of the persons at present as well as their availability to have these qualifications (three to five years prognosis); identifying the capacities of local economic agents to organise courses of (re)qualification, improvement of practical training at the place of work; researching curricula and syllabi of education institutions in the area (schools, high schools, vocational schools, post-graduate schools, colleges and universities) and comparing them to the necessary labour force, by domains, economic branches and trades; presenting lists of qualifications in demand at a certain point, latent qualifications – which are not used in the labour market, usually during crisis period, either by those who possess them, or by those who are in search for them and do not know where to find them; outdated qualifications – “worn out” qualifications as a result of new technologies (they can be revived at a certain moment – such as farming and husbandry services).

The process of professional reconversion is largely influenced by the complex problems of the jobs offerors: preference for the complete or particular thing, observance of labour legislation by the employers; salary levels and labour conditions (night shifts, long hours, work in shifts, social assistance in the company, bonuses for difficult and dangerous conditions, manufacture and labour hygiene, promotion, relations with supervisors and subordinates, life cost for the individuals and their family); the flexibility of the labour force supply (desire to participate in qualification and requalification courses, possibilities of travelling to other areas where there are jobs available for trades and professions conform to the training); the social issues of the unemployed (living standard of families where a member is unemployed, loss of motivation to work or to search for a job, loss of confidence and self-respect and respect for the others, loss of friends, social assistance of the unemployed); attitude towards self-employment and entrepreneurship (availability to work as an independent authorised self-employed person, creation of jobs for the unemployed); level of labour force emigration (to other countries, by social-professional categories, ages, genders or nationalities); tendency of excluding from the labour market certain categories of persons from a certain area (youth, women, national minorities, former convicts, persons aged over 50).

The professional qualification, requalification and improvement of the unemployed is organised by the Divisions for Labour and Social Security and takes place in: own centres for qualification, requalification and improvement; different organisations such as autonomous enterprises under state’s supervision, companies, SMEs and lucrative associations; public and private educational institutions; and natural persons authorised to perform independent activities according to the law, on the basis of conventions (Cojocaru, 2000, pp. 146-148).

The qualification and re-qualification of the unemployed can be done in trades, specialisations, positions and activities corresponding to the labour force demands. The

training curricula and syllabi are elaborated by the Division for Labour and Social Security and the units where the training is offered, in accordance with the legal stipulations. The duration is set differentially: up to maximum 6 months, in relation with the complexity of the trade, profession or activity, and when the persons who are to get qualified have already practical knowledge and skills in the respective trade, the duration can be cut into half compared to the full duration of a requalification course for the same profile.

The qualification or re-qualification courses can be attended by the persons who are apt to work in the respective trade, profession or activity, who have the adequate studies and were selected and professionally oriented; the persons who did not graduate from the compulsory education, but possess minimum general knowledge for some simpler trades or activities which do not require theoretical training. The persons with diminished working capacity or with deficiencies are admitted to these courses only with the recommendation of the commission of medical examination and recovery of labour capacity.

For the jobs in economics and administration where the competition is harsh and the demand for qualification and re-qualification courses is higher, the Divisions for Labour and Social Security, together with the interested units, can establish other conditions of professional orientation and selection, including the subjecting of candidates to psychological and skills testing.

The persons who receive unemployment allowance admitted to qualification or re-qualification courses are obliged to conclude with the Division of Labour and Social Security a commitment, established by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equality of Opportunities, and the latter concludes conventions with the units where the graduates will be assigned, by which the units pledge themselves to employ them after graduation (the persons who do not receive unemployment allowance do not sign such a commitment). Qualification and re-qualification comprise: theoretical training, which is offered according to the case at the office of the centres or at different units, the training programme being organised according to the conditions, one or two days a week, continuous or in 2-3 cycles. The practical training is usually made in the unit where the persons will be employed or in other units established by the courses organisers or at the qualification and requalification centres (in these situations it can be only practical training). The graduation from the qualification and re-qualification courses is done through an examination, consisting in a theoretical test taken before the examination board constituted at the Division for Labour and Social Security, and a practical test.

The expenditure for the activity of qualification and requalification of the persons who receive unemployment allowance are borne by the Division for Labour and Social Security from the unemployment fund and comprise, according to the law (beside the payment of the unemployment allowance): the course participation fee for each person which is set by the units where the training takes place, comprising the totality of the expenses necessary for the activity of qualification and requalification (personnel expenses, materials, upkeep and operation); expenditure for editing printed materials, published in the press, broadcast on the radio, on TV, as well as the organisation by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equality of Opportunities and its

territorial organisms of some actions of information of the unemployed and the economic agents about the demand and supply of jobs, the opportunities of qualification and requalification in view of the reintegration of the unemployed. The revenues resulted from the works effected by the trainees during the training period, from which one retains the amounts that are paid to them, will be transferred to the unemployment fund.

The persons who, according to the law, are not entitled to receive unemployment allowance, as well as other persons who desire to get qualified or requalified, with priority those who wish to carry on free initiative activities, may be admitted with the payment of schooling expenditure, whereas the persons who, according to the law, are not entitled to the employment allowance or the persons for whom the unemployment allowance has ceased and do not earn any other incomes (or their monthly incomes are under 50% of the minimum salary in the economy), who desire to attend a qualification or requalification course do not have to pay schooling fees; the Divisions for Labour and Social Security have the task to organise, within the limits of the available funds, qualification or requalification courses of the unemployed who desire to carry on free initiative activities (Government Decision H.G. no. 288/20.04/1991 regarding the qualification and requalification of the unemployed, Romania's Official Gazette, no. 104/15.05/1991).

The organisation of a qualification or requalification course is done in the following conditions: that there are demands from units or interested persons; that there are no qualified persons in the records of the Labour Office for the trade or profession for which the course is organised; that there are well-endowed training facilities, well prepared teachers and trainers, didactic materials and practice locations.

The guidance and control of the manner of organising and teaching qualification and requalification courses is done by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Security through inspectors for the monitoring of the activity regarding the establishment and payment of the unemployment allowance; the specialised inspectors of the Division for Labour and Social Security, experts, teachers and foremen-instructors of the Centre for the Qualification and Requalification of the Unemployed.

The persons admitted to the courses of qualification and requalification of the unemployed have to meet the following requirements: to be graduates of the general compulsory education, to be apt for the respective need or to have the recommendation of the commission of medical evaluation and recovery of labour capacity, to meet other requirements related to professional selection and orientation, including passing certain skills tests, if for a certain trades such conditions are set.

The persons who receive unemployment allowance should conclude a commitment pledging them selves to get employed in the units where they will be assigned. The activity of theoretic training and practical training is carried on based on curricula and syllabi specific for each trade, drawn up by the Centre for the Qualification and Requalification or by the Labour Force Office and the units where the course is given. The theoretic training is established to be around 33% of the total training hours, whereas the practical training represents 67% of the total. The verification of knowledge and skills acquired by the trainees is done during the entire process of theoretic instruction and practical training. The final graduation examination

can be taken by all the trainees who passed the subjects of the curriculum, and this final exam consists in a practical test and written and oral theoretic tests. The list of graduates from the qualification or requalification courses, by trades, is filed with the Office of Labour Force – the placement office – which assigns them to their working places (Methodological norms regarding the organisation of qualification or requalification of the unemployed – annex to the norms approved by the Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Security no. 149/1991).

3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES BY PROFESSIONAL TRAINING. INTERVENTION PROJECT

Professional training represents the learning process, helping to the orientation of the development strategy of human resources, which can shape the future and can be integrated into the national and regional programme of economic and social development. At the integration into the practical equation of this strategy we consider it necessary to combine the efforts of specialists belonging both to sociology and to economy, who will have to become partners in an efficient dialogue.

Toffler H. in 1995 affirmed that the investment in man and professional training prove to be, under the condition specific to world economy on the threshold of the 3rd millennium “... a source of power of the highest quality, which gains in importance with each nano-second...” (p. 467). Professional training represents the process of learning, aimed at orienting the strategy that can mould the future.

Andrioni F. forwarded the idea that in the present context, because of the increasingly high complexity of the labour market, it is necessary for each individual to make realistic decisions as regards his or her training and professional career, especially when one takes into consideration “the dynamics of economic and social changes generating diverse professional challenges, but also employment opportunities on the labour market” (2011, p. 30)

It is essential that the strategy of human resources development gets integrated into the national and regional programme of economic and social reform and observes certain stages: identification of the guidelines allowing the alignment of professional training to the requirements to the economic-social development; analysing the situation existing in the Caraş-Severin county in order to identify the problems affecting the operation of the local labour market; the partnership and dialogue among specialists, able to contribute to the grounding of the strategic scene of human resources development, analysing the exiting theories and practices in order to find the most efficient possibilities of correlating labour supply and demand.

By shaping the strategy of human resources development one strengthens the social and economic dimension of reform in our country’s labour market. It is important to shift the attention in the field of human resources from the national to the regional level. The professional training should be done with focus both on a short-time perspective, which should meet the immediate requirements of employment and other processes of training, improvement or reconversion, as well as on a medium and long-term perspective which will succeed in combing results in a national or regional policy of human resources development on the labour market.

The territorial area comprised in the project is the town of Reșița, mono-industrial town where technical qualifications are predominant and the offer of professional training is poorly covered.

The objectives and activities of the financing frame *Development of Human Resources, Active Employment Measures* are in accordance with the EU Guidelines of the Employment Strategy, with those of the National Strategy for Employment 2004-2010 and with the strategic and action directions for lifelong professional training 2005-2010. One has taken into account the elimination of structural unemployment problems in Romania, the key issues to approach being related to the high unemployment rate among the youth (persons aged between 15 and 25), the long-time unemployed, the persons in search of a job living in the rural areas and the persons employed in agriculture with low incomes.

Approaching this problem by the intense use of active measures, focused on professional training, will increase mobility, flexibility and adaptability of the persons on the labour market, generating thus a higher unemployment rate.

The University "Eftimie Murgu" of Reșița implemented, in the period 2008-2010, a project in the Active Measure for Employment activity field, which should correspond to the goals and priorities set on the national and regional level in the domain of employment and promotion of lifelong professional training. The project aimed at establishing a Centre for Career Counselling and Professional Requalification (CORP) within the University "Eftimie Murgu" of Reșița.

General objective: promoting an inclusive society meant to facilitate access and insertion on the labour market of the young employed.

The project contributes to the reaching of the objective regarding the increase of the employment rate among the youth by facilitating access to education and employment. By its activities, the project proposed an inclusive model of social insertion of the young people who are professionally inactive by individualised programmes of qualification - requalification, support and career counselling; awareness and direct information campaigns of decision-makers on the labour market, and indirectly of society, all scientifically grounded through a local survey. These endeavours were supported by a partnership among local authorities, local centres of economic-social research, employment institutions and NGOs specialised in the youth issues. The project aimed at counselling the young unemployed persons in search of a job.

Four qualification courses were organised, all authorised by the CNFPA, i.e.: web page designer, social worker, specialist in computer-aided design and guesthouse manager.

A database was elaborated with the persons who demanded counselling and a survey was conducted on the unemployed counselling and skills, in order to identify new trades for which the university could get future authorisations. The survey, represented by the analysis of the application of professional interests tests, the scope of the professional success, is a transfer of weight from skills and abilities to professional interests and motivations.

The University "Eftimie Murgu" of Reșița considered it necessary to adapt its educational offer to the requirements of the regional and local labour market, and the

reasons that contributed to the selection of these qualifications were the following:

- *For social workers*; in Caraş-Severin there was a very limited offer of authorised suppliers who organised qualification courses in Reşita, Anina, Oraviţa. Unfortunately, most persons who attended these courses went to work abroad, and in the county we could notice a deficit of such specialists.

- *For touristic guesthouse manager*; in our county at UEMR we offer a specific specialisation, Economy of Commerce, Tourism and Services, training both qualified personnel and also graduates who wish to become specialists. There are numerous locations (mountain tourism - Semenic, Little Mountain, Crivaia, Gărâna; Rural tourism - Bolvaşnita, Caraşului Gorges, Nerei Gorges, Sasca Montană) which started touristic projects, but being at their start do not have specialists. The demand for such qualifications is increasing, guesthouses cannot operate without a manager.

- *for web pages designer*; tourism means also IT (software), foreign languages, large-scale modern management and marketing. All these can be acquired by youth, which have the capacity to learn and have the ambition to build a career.

- *for specialist in the field of computer-aided design*; almost every job supposes, in the present perspective, the use of computer and the Internet.

Within the Sector Operational Programme Development of Human Resources 2007-2013, in the chapter *Analysis of the present situation of the development of human resources*, it was mentioned that the high unemployment rate among the youth represents a major negative effect determined by the poor correlation of qualifications supplied by education and initial professional training with the labour market. This rate remained high for almost all the levels of education / training. A young person's chances to be integrated on the labour market increase along with his or her level of qualification, the situation being different in the case of older population. This fact can be explained by the low connection between education and labour market. The poor degree of correlation between school and labour market explains why the young graduates, compared to the older population, need a relatively longer period to get inserted to the labour market and adapt to the requirements of the place of work, irrespective of their level of education / training. The lowest degree of correlation is mostly specific to the intermediate levels of qualification. The young unemployed were mostly men, who did not succeed in getting employed, and were registered as unemployed immediately after school graduation. In Romania young people have been and still are very exposed to the unemployment risk, the unemployment rate among them being 2-3 times higher compared to the EU average.

Following the evaluation of the results of the survey conducted locally, we found that in Caraş-Severin county there were not enough social workers with secondary training, because they were trained through qualification courses and came from among women aged over 45, who had been laid off from other positions. Even among the persons qualified through lifelong learning courses, many of them preferred to work abroad. Following this analysis, we find that the young unemployed aged between 15 and 25 have the following educational needs: correlating their qualifications with the labour market, and conceiving courses adequate for the economic activities that can be developed locally, for instance guesthouse manager, social worker; organising free courses, as the young unemployed cannot afford to pay

for another qualification; creating a centre for career counselling and professional orientation, because, beside family and friends, young people are thus helped by specialists to make a career decision using scientific methods and techniques, more efficient than the empirical methods. If the young people desire to make efficient decisions as regards their educational and professional trajectory, then the process started with the awareness and evaluation of their own person..

The beneficiaries of the intervention project were the families of the persons who found a job; the state or local budgets, which were lifted the burden of paying employment allowances or social allowances according to Law; employers.

As pointed out, the general objective was represented by the active and preventive employment measures destined to the unemployed, focused on the young unemployed, long-term unemployed, and persons in search of a job from the rural milieu, as well as persons working in agriculture who earn low incomes.

Among the results of the project we can list: the creation of the Centre for Career Counselling and Professional Requalification; at least 56 persons acquired a new qualification following the participation in the courses of web design, social worker, specialist in the field of computer-aided design and guesthouse manager; counselling a number of 120 young unemployed persons, the survey *The unemployed - identity and professional training*.

The Centre for Career Counselling and Professional Requalification provided the young unemployed special opportunities related to career counselling. At present there are career counsellors in some high schools, but the young people who graduated from high school 8-10 years ago, or those who attended a vocational school, did not have the possibility, at that time, to know their specific skills, their thinking style, their domains of interest, their personality traits. This is why many young people graduate from a school and get a qualification in a trade they will never practice.

The partner in this project was AJOFM Caraş-Severin, the County Employment Agency, which provided the database used for the selection of the persons who attended the courses, and attempted to identify the potential employers for the persons qualified in the project.

The project sustainability was assured by means of tertiary activities, by the authorisation of the CNFPA in other fields too: social mediation, care-taker of senior citizens at their domicile, personal assistant of the persons with serious handicaps, etc.

The project had multiplying effects, as at its completion at the University "Eftimie Murgu" of Reşita one created a Centre for Career Counselling and Professional Requalification, equipped with a modern IT laboratory. By continuing the activities one ensured the increase of the number of trainees and hence the multiplication of the project results. Another activity in the project was on-line counselling, which meant the creation of a portal for on-line counselling called e-Counselling with the following options: courses offer; career planning, educational environment, lifelong learning; on-line assistance; career management; classic counselling, labour market; partner placement enterprises; CV elaboration. On-line career counselling is a rapid method to find details when needed, in the profess of personal development. Although it is different as operation modality compared to classic counselling, its advantages are obvious, i.e. participation in the programme is

not conditioned by a certain location; the counselled person is in direct and permanent contact with the specialists; one may continue the personality evaluation through a programme of classical pre-counselling, it is less expensive. At the end of the counselling stages the beneficiary will receive a personalised report of career evaluation containing the analysis of the results of the personality inventory, the strengths and “weaknesses” which have to be fortified through diverse programmes of personal development.

4. CONCLUSIONS

By its theoretic and methodological content the study aims at underlining the importance of profession and career, of reconstructing professional identity in creating a balance between individual and society, strengthening the correlations between the labour force demand and supply and the specificity of professional training. We attempted to put this plea into practice by the intervention project - “Creation of the Centre for Career Counselling and Professional Requalification” - CORP within the University “Eftimie Murgu” of Reșița.

Grace to its results, the project contributed to the stimulation of the participation of the young unemployed in the social, economic and educational life, the consideration of the importance of the role played by education and professional training among the youth, the elimination of stereotypes, prejudices and certain managers’ practices towards the young generation’s lack of experience.

Career counselling contributes to the moulding of the future, to the shaping of the young person’s own destiny, by information, education, self-training, self-orientation, and this person becomes thus able to make rational, justified and motivating professional and career choices.

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