RELATION BETWEEN EDUCATION AND ADAPTATION TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT: This research is going to focus upon the different opinions of the persons having a low/average/high level of education according to age, sex, occupation, income, and their expectations regarding labor market offers, as well as the problems the Jiu Valley has to face at present. The research took place in 2007, on a sample counting 1596 subjects. The data of the research show that the subjects having a higher education level also have a more active attitude towards the problems they are confronted with; they have the capacity of understanding these problems more complexely and are more optimistic than the subjects having lower education.

KEY WORDS: level of education, social and economic statute, attitude when facing community's problems, passivity - activism, pessimism-optimism

Introduction. A lot of researchers belonging to various fields such as sociology, economy, and psychology have studied the relation between the educational level and other characteristics, namely: income, social statute. The relation between education and economic aspects was studied by the school of human capital. G. Becker (according to Hatos, 2006) develops a theory about the foundation of human capital and analysis the revenue rates of education and training investments. Cherkaoui shows that within modern societies the income is positively correlated with variables such as age, sex, social class. Nevertheless, under equal circumstances, the level of education has the most powerful effect upon incomes, except age.

R.J. Herrenstein and Ch. Murray (according to Roth-Szamosközi, 1998), in their controversed book, “The Bell’s Curve”, have analyzed the relation between intelligence and various aspects of the environment. They have studied the relation between the intelligence coefficient and education, social statute, income, ethnic affiliation. The authors associate the notion of “social classes” with that of “cognitive

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classes”, since their researches show that the IQ correlates with social condition. The borders among cognitive classes have been fixed at 5, 25, 75, and 95 centiles of intelligence distribution among population. The persons belonging to the superior class form the society’s elite. Social problems powerfully focus at the lower end of cognitive distribution. The authors have a positive opinion regarding the efficiency of the efforts of cognitive activation. The raise of intellectual level during childhood might mean the settling of a part of the social problems. Intelligence could be improved through nourishment improvement, psychic stimulation at tender age, a better quality of education.

Starting from this kind of researches (and also relying upon daily observations) we aimed at focusing certain differences existing between those having a higher/average/lower education level. We targetted this goal as we frequently meet the opinion according to which at present the effort necessary to graduate a faculty is not worth (people say that a lot of graduates do not find a job matching their education).

**Goals of the research.** The analysis aims at focusing upon certain differences among those having a lower/average/higher level of education from the following points of view: age, sex, occupation, income, their expectations regarding labor market offers; of the opinions regarding the problems the Jiu Valley has to face at present.

**Methodology of the research.** The research took place in the district of Hunedoara, in the 6 towns of the Jiu Valley: Aninoasa, Lupeni, Petrila, Petrosani, Uricani, Vulcan, in July 2007. The method employed by the research was indirect investigation, and the working instrument was the questionnaire. The research took place on a sample counting 1596 subjects. The sample was established according to the principle of connected shares: age, sex, residence. More specifically, we took into account the whole population of the Jiu Valley and calculated the share of each administrative unit out of the 6 ones belonging to the Jiu Valley: Petrila, Petrosani, Aninoasa, Vulcan, Lupeni and Uricani. We also included the population over 18 years old belonging to each territory unit of the Jiu Valley, grouping it according to intervals such as: 18-25 years old, 26-30 years old, 31-35 years old, etc.

The completion of the shares was done in its largest part at random; yet all variables were connected. Accordingly we provided the foundation of a sample that had a quite positive representativity as compared with that of a simple random sample, but without the possibility of precising the maximum admitted error. Nevertheless, specialized literature proves that this type of sample, in case one does not have at hand a complet sample background (as we would have liked, namely electoral lists), is the most economic and sure possibility of carrying out a research.

In order to process the data we used the SPSS program (mainly the hi-square test). **The analysis of the relations among the level of education, age, sex, occupation, income.** The level of education of the 1596 subjects was grouped into 4 categories: maximum 8 graduated forms, 10 forms and/ or vocational school, college or college followed by post college school, superior education (tab.1). The structure of the sample according to age is displayed in tab.2. Further we analyzed the relations between the level of education and age, sex, occupation, income. The relation between the level of education and each of these variables is highly significant from a statistic point of view.
Table 1. Structure of the sample according to the level of education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>No. of abs.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum 8 forms</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 forms or vocational school</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/ post college school</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>38.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior education</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>22.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1596</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table no. 2. Structure of the sample according to age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No. of abs.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between 18 – 30 years old</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 45 years old</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 – 60 years old</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60 years old</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1596</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relation between the level of education and age ($\chi^2 = 308.04; p < 0.001$): those having a low level of education (maximum 8 forms) are mainly old persons, over 60 years old. 40% of the persons with superior education have maximum 30 years old. (fig.1). Out of these data one can infer that during the last decades the level of education of the Jiu Valley’s population significantly increased.

![Figure 1. Relation education - age](image)

The relation between education and sex ($\chi^2 = 20.724, p < 0.001$): the persons having lower education are mainly women (62.6% of those with maximum 8 forms). Most of those having 10 forms and/or vocational school are men (54.4%), and of those having college/ post college school are women (56.5%). Regarding those with superior education the percent of men and women is almost the same 50 – 50% (fig.2).
As one would have expected, there is a statistically significant relation between education and occupation (χ² = 350.934; p < 0.001): 84.8% of those having a lower level of education are retired persons or housewives; the large majority of those having college/post college school (58.4%) and of those having superior education (70.1%) are employed. At the same time we should say that 55.2% of the unemployed persons are college or post college school graduates, and only 13.4% have superior education (fig.3).

The relation between education and income (χ² = 265.268; p < 0.001): among those having a low level of education almost 50% earn up to 500 lei per month (about 150 euro), and only 0.5% earn more than 2000 lei (about 600 euro). 75% of those who have at least 10 forms earn between 500 and 2000 lei per month. Among those having superior education 16% earn more than 2000 lei (fig.4). The subjects’ self
appreciations regarding the degree their family’s incomes are/ are not enough in order to live decently match the data previously displayed and are correlated with their educational level ($\chi^2 = 168.127; p < 0.001$). 54% of those having a low education level state that their income does not give them the possibility of living a decent life. Among those with superior education only 10% agree with this opinion. It is nevertheless quite worrying the fact that only 7.9% of all the subjects declare that their family’s income is more than enough in order to live a decent life; the majority (62.8%) consider that their incomes hardly provide them a decent living standard. This opinion shows that most of the Jiu Valley’s inhabitants are not content with their living standard.

![Figure 4. Relation education - income](image)

Further we asked ourselves the following question: what do/ would like to do the subjects in order to improve their living standard? Their answers were quite discouraging. The largest majority of the subjects (76%) do nothing in order to grow their incomes. The others deploy occasional activities or loan something (20.4%), or might have a second job (3.6%). Although those who try to do something in order to improve their condition are quite few, figure no. 5 shows that their percent grows with their level of education ($\chi^2 = 66.586; p < 0.001$).

Those who are not satisfied with their living conditions in the Jiu Valley want to move to another locality or country. 70% of the subjects thought of this possibility, and one third of them have already been away for a certain period of time. This tendency is more obvious in the case of those persons having a higher level of education than in the case of those having a lower education ($\chi^2 = 54.089; p < 0.001$). 78% of those with superior education thought of leaving the Jiu Valley. Among those having maximum 8 forms, 55.6% thought of leaving. In order to find out what the population’s expectations are regarding the labor market offers, the subjects were asked to say where they would like to work (within state or private companies), what would they expect from their job, and what are the factors, according to their opinion, one should take into account when establishing salaries.
The inhabitants of the Jiu Valley expressed more confidence in the state field than in the private one: 46% of the questioned persons would like to work for “the state”. A small percent (16.3%) would choose a job in the private field; the others are not concerned with this aspect. There is a statistically significant relation between these options and education \((\chi^2 = 81.633; p < 0.001)\): those with a higher level of education know better what they want and are more confident in the private field (fig.6).

Those having low education would like their job offers them a good salary (49% of those having maximum 8 forms), while 48% of those with superior education are concerned with the recognition of their personal achievements and with promoting opportunities \((\chi^2 = 57.785; p < 0.001)\). When establishing salaries the main factor one should have in view, according to 33% of the subjects, is job competence. Only 6% of
them believe that salary should largely depend on the extent labor product is demanded on labor market. One also encounters here differences depending on education ($\chi^2 = 48.28; p < 0.001$): those with a low level of education consider that salary should mostly depend on the job’s characteristics (the more a job is difficult the more the salary should be higher); Those having superior education think importance should be paid especially to competence and education level.

The analysis of the relations between the level of education and the opinions regarding certain important problems of the community. Further we wanted to find out what the subjects’ opinions regarding the problems of the Romanian society, in general, and in the area they live (the Jiu Valley), in particular; what they believe about the causes of these problems, and what solutions they envisage. We assumed that as regards these problems too the subjects having a higher level of education are going to have different opinions as compared with those having a lower level of education.

Problems. According to the opinion of the questioned subjects the most serious problems of nowadays Romanian society are the following: the mass increase of poverty, unemployment, and the lack of jobs. Most of those having a lower level of education (70% of those who graduated maximum 8 forms) give these three answers representing only the finding of certain problems. 44% of those having superior education refer to more profound problems that can be considered as generating the economic problems: inefficiency of economic restructuring, explosion of social inequities, dilettantism of political class, deviance phenomena (criminality, toxicomania, violence). These problems are considered to be serious by only 27.3% of those having low education ($\chi^2 = 49.842; p < 0.001$). In case the question regards the Jiu Valley, the most serious problem is considered to be poverty and financial problems (60%), followed by unemployment (12.4%). The subjects having superior education pay a diminished attention to financial problems than the others.

Causes. Those who should involve more in settling down the problems of the inhabitants are local authorities. The attitude of the authorities is negative, and from this point of view there are no differences among the subjects having a higher/average/ lower level of education ($\chi^2 = 4.418; p = 0.882$). 77% of the questioned persons consider that local authorities do very little or almost nothing in order to develop the towns either because they do not have necessary financial resources or because they are simply not interested in doing anything. The inefficiency of the authorities is considered to be an important reason of the problems the Jiu Valley’s population is confronted with. The number of unemployed persons in the Jiu Valley is quite high; the fact might have causes determined by employers (who offer non-stimulating salaries, insecure jobs from the point of view of their duration, few jobs or jobs that do not match education/training of those who look for a job), or by the potential employees (who are not interested to work or have an insufficient level of education). The answers are significantly different, according to the subjects’ level of education ($\chi^2 = 67.199; p < 0.001$). The subjects having the lowest level of education (up to 8 forms) consider that high unemployment is due to the small number of jobs offered by job fairs and to the fact that jobs do not match the qualification of those who look for a job. At the same time they consider that those who do not find a job are partly guilty as they
are not motivated to work; yet, they do not think at the fact that those who want to be hired should have a higher level of education. The subjects having superior education consider that the number of jobs is not insufficient, yet the level of education of those who look for a job is too low.

The condition of the Jiu Valley might be improved in case investors coming from other areas/other countries initiate businesses; nevertheless a certain restraint of those who might invest here is to be noticed. The causes of these restraints are differently perceived by the subjects having a high/average/low level of education ($\chi^2 = 78.328$; $p < 0.001$). A large part of those who have maximum 8 forms (51.5%) and 10 forms/vocational school (43%) consider that the main cause determining the investors to avoid the area is the general poverty of the region. This answer suggests certain confusion between cause and effect (the small number of investors is the cause of poverty and not vice-versa). Among those having superior education only 23% has the same opinion. Those having college, post college school or superior education consider that the low interest of investors for this area is due to non-stimulating and contradictory legislation, to insufficient interest of local authorities, to the unfavorable image of the area throughout the country as well as to the local investors who do not welcome other competitors.

**Solutions.** During the 20th century the main economic activity of the Jiu Valley was mining. In the last decade, as a result of diminishing the mining sector’s activity, the number of unemployed persons increased and numberless economic and social problems came out. Such circumstances might have determined most of the subjects (97%) to consider that maintaining functional the mining units would be benefic. At the same time the subjects are also aware of the negative aspects implied by continuing this activity. Both the advantages and the disadvantages of maintaining mining as a main activity in the area are quite differently understood by the subjects having a low/average/high level of education (advantages: $\chi^2 = 50.232$; $p < 0.001$; disadvantages: $\chi^2 = 37.93$; $p < 0.001$). The subjects having graduated maximum 8 forms believe that the most important advantage is the fact that by doing this a part of the inhabitants might have a job. Those with superior education also admit this fact; yet, they think not only to the individuals who would have a job but also to the global development of the area and to the strategic importance of mining for the national economy. The continuation of mining has also disadvantages. For those having modest education the main disadvantage is the fact that young people are forced to go to other areas or to other fields of activity in order to find a job (probably in order not to work in mining). The continual polution of the environment is considered to be the most important disadvantage by those having superior education. They also consider that mining activity is inefficient and does not determine economic growth, a fact that, on a long term, would have negative consequences.

When answering the question: “What do you appreciate most in the Jiu Valley?” 80% of the subjects refer to the beauty of the environment. This answer suggests a possible solution regarding the economic problems of the area: namely, the development of tourism. The more the subjects have a higher level of education the more they realize that this could be an opportunity of economically improve the area (42.3% of those having college/post college school education and 39.7% of those
having superior education agree with this opportunity). They also consider that in order to economically improve the condition of the area it is important to re-build infrastructure and to develop the private field. For those having a low level of education (0 - 10 forms, vocational school) the best solution might be the reconstruction of dwelling places (probably because in this field a lot of people having a low education may be employed). They believe that tourism has small chances to become the main occupation of the inhabitants in the area.

The population of the Jiu Valley pessimistically regards the future of the area. About 65% of the subjects consider that within 10 years the social and economic condition of the Jiu Valley is going to be worst or the same with the present one. Nevertheless, the degree of pessimism/optimism is not the same with the subjects having different levels of education ($\chi^2 = 39.893; p < 0.001$). The most pessimistic are those having a low level of education. Only 19.2% of them consider that within 10 years the situation is going to be better. Among those with college/post college school/superior education, the percent of the optimistic ones, of those who believe that the Jiu Valley is capable to economically develop in the future, is higher (30%, and 36%).

Conclusions. The research emphasizes the numberless significant differences between those having a high/average/low level of education. As a conclusion, we should stress upon the differences between the two extremes: those having 0 - 8 forms and those having superior education. Intermediary groups (those who graduated 10 forms/vocational school and those having a college/post college school) are situated between the two extremes. The persons having a low level of education are older and among them the percent of women is larger (these data show the growth of the level of education during the last decades as well as the fact that in the past boys were mainly educated). Within this group the percent of the persons who do not work (being retired or house wives) is higher, and the monthly incomes are lower. Although they are not content with their incomes these persons do almost nothing in order to improve their material condition. In case they have the opportunity to choose, the persons having low education prefer to work for the “state”. When they look for a job, the main criterium is salary which, in their opinion, should match working conditions.

The persons having superior education are younger; most of them are employed and earn over 1000 lei per month. Neither they are content with their incomes, yet almost 40% of them do supplemental activities in order to grow their incomes. More than three fourth of them thought of leaving the Jiu Valley. The persons having superior education accept to a larger extent than those with lower education to work in the private field. For them, the recognition of personal capabilities, promotion opportunities become more important than salary; they consider that salaries should be given according to the level of competence and education. The level of education is strictly correlated with the manner personal and community problems are perceived. The persons having a lower level of education notice the problems they have to face (poverty, lack of jobs) and tend to incriminate the others for these misfortunes. Local authorities are blamed for their insufficient involvement in settling down the problems as well as employers as they offer insufficient jobs or as the jobs offered do not match the qualification/education of those who look for a job. They realize that some people become unemployed because they are not motivated to work, but are slightly aware of
the fact that their low level of education may be a cause of their difficulty in finding a job. For such persons two solutions that might improve economic problems are the reconstruction of the dwelling places and the functional maintaining of the mining units in the area; yet, they only think of the individuals who accordingly may find a job and not to the social and economic implications of these activities.

Those having superior education have a deeper perception of the problems they/ the community face/faces. A large number of these persons notice that the real problems of the area are not the “visible” ones (poverty, unemployment), but the deep ones that, in fact, determine the surface problems: inefficiency of economic restructuring, explosion of social inequities, diletantism of the political class, criminality, toxicomania, violence, etc. Refering to the causes of these problems they not only “accuse” local authorities but also those who do not find a job as the latter ones have a low level of education. The situation may be improved, and superior education persons identify several solutions (attracting new investors, maintaining functional mining units, developing the private field, reconstructing infrastructure, and especially developing tourism); they have a whole image of the advantages, disadvantages, and difficulties in settling the problems.

The persons having a low level of education are “trapped” by present. They superficially are aware of the problems they have to face and blame the others for their misfortune. They slightly understand the causes that determine these problems, have a reduced capacity of realizing their own responsibility for their condition. These persons are relatively passive; they do not have enough initiative and do not manage to find out efficient solutions in order to overpass their own difficulties or those of the community. All these problems are also reflected on the emotional plan: these persons are more pessimistic; they seem not to trust their future. The more the level of education increases the more the chances of finding a job increase as well as those of earning a higher monthly salary. These persons are more active, they are ready to do something in order to improve their own life. At the same time education also determines the development of the capacity of perceiving not only the problems but also their causes and of identifying various solutions. The persons who have such capacities are not so helpless and have greater chances to maintain their psychic balance.

REFERENCES: