

# IMPACT OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMS ON FUTURE HUMAN RESOURCES

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**ABSTRACT:** New millennium brings with it a series of lawsuits prefigured at the end of last century, but now receives a special scale. Among these could include: the process of globalization, informatization of society, high professionalism of the workforce, post-industrialization, growth in the scale of the services of health, leisure time, etc. In this context, the education system plays an increasingly important place. If you follow the evolution of prestige scales in developed countries, we can see a change in the way of assessing the contribution of functional occupations as a result of the focus that was placed in a different time or on a specific direction for the development.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the recent years, three main directions have been identified that affect the demands that higher education graduates face. One direction is the increasing accent that has been placed on education and training, which is seen by many as the most important factor affecting economic growth according to the study of World Bank in 2002 [3]. The term knowledge society has been coined to indicate not only the expansion of participation in higher education or of knowledge-intensive or high-technology sectors of the economy, but rather a situation in which the characteristics of work organisations across the board change under influence of the increasing importance of knowledge [1]. Another direction shows changes in labour market processes. In year 2000, it was introduced the concept of the “transitional labour market” to indicate how in modern society, the demarcation lines between work, leisure time, education and care have been blurred, leading to increased mobility and flexibility patterns, to de-standardisation of the life course and to an overall focus on employability. There is a great evidence that the transition is non-linear and chaotic according to and that many graduates and school-leavers find themselves in a precarious situation. The last direction relates to the internationalisation and globalisation of product markets and labour markets and their impact for higher education.

The above mentioned directions give new indicators on the competences with which individuals need to be equipped:

- *Innovation and knowledge management* derived from the fact that the workers are often expected to do more than simply carry out a set of predefinite tasks;
- *Professional expertise* - Many higher education graduates are expected to become experts in their professional field. Experts distinguish themselves from starters by their superior mental organisation of, and ability to recall, domain-specific knowledge, and by the way they approach problems, make diagnoses and statistics, use automated procedures, have intuitive feelings about solutions and correctly give conclusions and interpretations.
- *Functional flexibility* - The world of work is one very dynamic. Rapid developments in technology, markets, organisations and relevant knowledge make it necessary that higher education graduates are able to take up diverse challenges, many not directly related to their own field of expertise and to quickly acquire brand new knowledge. This have implications and have capabilities to make changes in the job content, mobility within the organisation to another job or mobility to other organisations. In order to be flexible, graduates obviously need a well-developed ability to adapt to changes by quickly learning new knowledge and skills and an ability to cope with changes. It is important to note that such a response, which can be characterised as ‘changing the worker to fit the job’ is not the only way graduates can respond to change. Another possibility is that graduates change the environment in which they work, so as to make better use of their existing skills. And thirdly flexible graduates need to possess a high level of ability to deal with change in a productive way, consider changes as windows of opportunities rather than as threats, being more interested to learn and to try new procedures and using their work as a opportunity for acquiring new competences through experience.
- *Mobilisation of human resources* - Higher education graduates are expected to have the

ability to effectively mobilise their own competences and actively steer and direct one's own work as well as that of others. Several aspects can be distinguished. First of all, graduates need to possess a strongly developed ability to mobilize and make use of their own competences, which implies an ability to work autonomously when working alone, to cooperate fruitfully with others when working in a team, to manage their own skills, and to be motivated by the work at hand. Then graduates may be called upon to mobilize the capacities of others. This is associated with leadership skills, involving an ability to communicate ideas and inspire others, to plan and monitor work processes, and where necessary to be assertive and to take decisive action. Related to the first two aspects, graduates need to be able to organize work so as to make optimal use of the available human resources, creating synergies in teams, setting up clear lines of communication, and where necessary adapting the work environment to fit better with their own competences and those of their colleagues or subordinates.

- *International orientation* - Globalisation and the fading of national delimitations increase the importance of a strong international orientation. This requires not only a good command of foreign languages, but also an ability to understand and empathise with other cultures, a willingness and ability to appreciate the limitations of the own national context, in short the development of intercultural competences.

## **2. HIGHER EDUCATION AREA AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES**

The function of the university has changed over time. If in the past the medieval university provide ideals today it involves skills. Thus the role of university is not to create elite able to contribute to the emancipation of the masses but primarily to professionalize the workforce. Even more, the university assuming a law largely on scientific research market. Creating a well-functioning 'knowledge triangle' of education, research and innovation and helping all citizens to be better skilled are crucial for growth and jobs, as well as for equity and social inclusion. Public and private budgets are under strong pressure, existing jobs are disappearing, and new ones often require different and higher level skills. Education and training systems should therefore become much more open and relevant to the needs of citizens, and to those of the labour market and society at large. Changes in society and their impact on Higher Education are

evolving ever faster; globalisation, demographic change and rapid technological developments combine to present new challenges and opportunities for third level institutions. Future jobs are likely to require higher levels and a different mixture of competences, skills, and qualifications. Higher education institutions have a strategic role to play in the success of our society and economy and their capacity to adapt to these changes and forestall new opportunities is crucial.

In Romania, the change occurred only after December 1989, but more strongly after 2000, when standards ARACIS and CNEAA came into force, they led to a better structuring of the curricula in line with the requirements and demands of contemporary society, and with the implementation of credit transfer system and alignment with EU standards, an opening to EU universities. The current organization of Romanian university on three levels (bachelor, master, doctorate) according to the Bologna Process makes it more flexible and lean over demand skills and knowledge services company needs. All this has forced the universities to access national and international programs, but often local or regional, to obtain material and financial resources to enable the development of the university. Consequently, these programs have accessed a great impact on lecturers who were determined to instrumentalized knowledge but also to restructure and adapt to the requirements of reality. In this case learning came as a result of observation, study, experience and training.

The work undertaken by these programs led to improved syllabuses of the courses or sometimes to introduce new courses to meet requirements. Grants enable international experts from various universities and research institutes to create a space for dialogue and work to help enrich the knowledge and solutions for optimal functioning of society. The feedback is in this situation a procedure for checking the quality of work performed and registered in the main trend. Great benefit brought by TEMPUS, PHARE, ERASMUS, etc. is the creation of networks of scientific research. The Commission – in response to a request from the 2008 Spring European Council – launched a comprehensive assessment of the future skills requirements and gaps in Europe up to 2020. This work includes in-depth assessments of skills supply and demand in Europe undertaken by CEDEFOP, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 18 sectoral studies that seek to identify emerging competences and future skills needs for key economic sectors and the Report of an independent Expert Group which provides a series of recommendations on how to

take work further on the New Skills for New Jobs initiative in the context of the EU's future 2020 strategy for growth and jobs.

Governments should establish strategies for lifelong learning and encourage their universities to open their doors to non-traditional and part-time learners and offer more courses for continuous professional development. In order to create other new types of learners requires a fundamental rethinking of how courses are designed and delivered to the target groups. New category of learners may not possess all formal requirements for entry into higher education, but they may have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills and competences through.

These policies should include also elements such as feedback to learners on the results of the assessment or the possibility for learners to appeal. Institutions are also encouraged to create 'assessment facilities' for counselling on and recognition of non-formal and informal learning and to offer more tailor-made programmes to non-traditional learners. The Commission supports university action to modernise doctoral programmes, involving stakeholders from industry. Growing numbers of mobile researchers, and in particular doctoral candidates.

Continuous improvement of quality of teaching and learning is a core task of universities. Institutions can help each other to improve through mutual assistance and benchmarking. The Quality assurance has also an external component as institutions are evaluated regularly by an external quality assurance agency.

Study abroad helps students to acquire new competences and can contribute to their success in the new labour market. It also contributes and facilitate intercultural dialogue and informed citizenship. Mobility therefore is a central objective of both Bologna Process and EU.

The Erasmus programme – the biggest Community programme in European Higher Education Area- has brought mobility to a wide range of countries and students from different backgrounds. This programme has grown from 3 000 students in 1987 to over 182 000 in 2007. Thanks to Erasmus, over 2 million students have studied abroad since 1987 and the objective is to achieve a cumulative total of 3 million by 2012.

These figures are impressive, but they only reach some 4 % of the graduate population. Erasmus and non-Erasmus mobility combined is expected to reach 10 % of the graduates by 2010. The European Commission have set an objective decided in

Leuven that by 2020 20 % of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad[5]. The introduction of bachelor/master degrees, which is new to most countries, is leading to a new kind of mobility, whereby students do their bachelor's in one country and their master's in another. Erasmus Mundus has supported up to now 133 joint masters courses and 13 joint doctoral programmes, involving some 700 universities from all countries worldwide, and the establishment of 63 broad academic partnerships as a basis for student and academic exchanges. Scholarships have been provided to more than 20.000 students and several thousands of academic staff, mainly from third countries to the EU. Moreover, Erasmus Mundus has supported 54 projects to promote European Higher Education, including studies, surveys, conferences, etc. Mobile researchers may benefit from the Marie Curie Actions and the services provided by the EURAXESS portal on jobs, services and rights. Universities are signing the Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers Career structures are to be adapted to facilitate staff mobility, including open international recruitment.

### **3. CHANGES IN THE LABOUR MARKET**

On the one hand, when graduates enter in the labour market, they can experience at least three types of changes which are related to different dimensions of flexibility: changes in the employment condition, in the occupation and the economic sector, and in employment relations. As far as the employment condition is concerned, graduate self-employment may rise or fall, graduates can shift from one employer to another being mobile through the labour market, and they may also shift from employment to unemployment. Further, it is possible that they change their occupation – moving vertically or horizontally within the occupational system – and/or the economic sector they work in. The graduates can experience changes in their employment relations as they can change the type of legal contract they have. I consider that also the international experience has his valuable assets. Taking into account the studies made by European Commission, we could identify that more than a quarter of graduates reported that they spent a period to study abroad and even more indicate that they work in an organization with an international scope or require a high level of foreign language proficiency. It was registered that a positive effect in the transition of the graduates to the labour market was in fact spending a mobility period for study during or after higher education.

This mobility periods abroad doesn't affect only the increasing chances for employment but also affects the level of wages obtained.

The next decade will be marked by an increasing demand for a high-qualified and adaptable workforce and more skills-dependent jobs. The general upward trend in skills demand can be illustrated by looking at required levels of education attainment, although these are a very approximated variable for skill levels.

It will be registered a growing demand from employers for transversal key competencies (problem-solving and analytical skills, self-management and communication skills, linguistic skills, and more generally, "non-routine skills").

Also, according to the different forecasts regarding changes in future qualification structure (like the one made by Cedefop in 2009- Figure 1)[6], shows that will be registered a substantial increase in the proportion of the adult labour force with high- and medium-level qualifications. In contrast, the number of people with low-level qualifications will decline in most EU countries. Regarding this trends, we can appreciate that all are in line with the Lisbon goal of making Europe "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world".

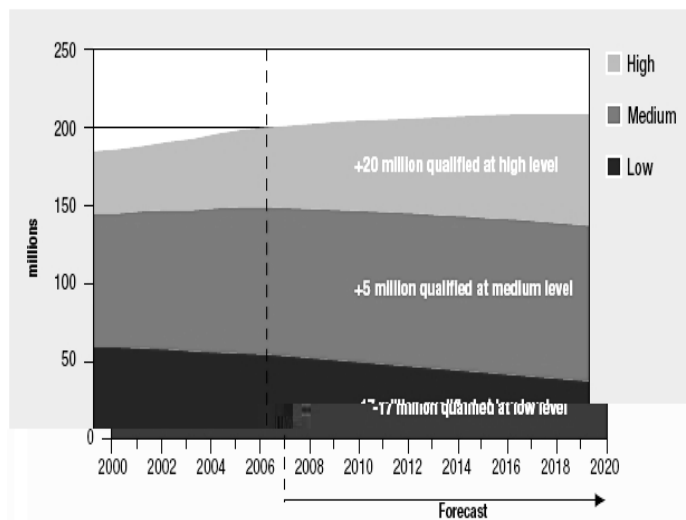


Figure 1. Changing qualification structure in EU - 2020

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Learning mobility helps young people in all learning contexts, not just in higher education, to strengthen their future employability as well as their personal development, but it is also good for institutions and

societies: it can make education and training systems as well as institutions more European and international, and help combat the risks of isolationism, protectionism and xenophobia. Clearly, all young people who enjoy and recommend their mobility experience to others are much better equipped to live and work in another European country than their parents and grandparents were. Overall, these community programs beyond material and financial targets are largely a way of training the most important human resources: academics. Both domestically and internationally, career success requires professional competence, knowledge and skills that demonstrate certain technical and / or management necessary to achieve the objectives and tasks assigned.

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