

SCHOOL PREPARATION AND EMPLOYMENT, ANCHORS FOR THE FUTURE

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ABSTRACT: *Placing a person in the labour field represents an objective that favours their social integration, as a result of the professional training provided by the completion of a proposed education cycle. Is there a correlation between the professional training of young people and their insertion on the labour market, in accordance with the need for labour in a certain field? Is there an individual strategy regarding school preparation and employment projection, following the point of view of both students and their representatives? Here are some current research questions of interest both for the academic environment that comes with the educational offer; but also for employers formulating the demand from the labour market. In most countries, including Romania, the school holds the monopoly on staff training and qualification. The education system is not criticized for this monopolization, but for the fact that it fails to fully respond to the current and future needs of the labour market. Therefore, in recent years, the need to establish an appropriate correspondence between professional training and the labour market is increasingly being insisted upon.*

KEY WORDS: *school training, professional training, educational offer, labour market, social integration.*

JEL CLASSIFICATIONS: *I20, I21.*

1. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

1.1. School preparation in Romania

Education, in the broadest sense, can be defined as "the specialized activity, specifically human, which mediates and diversifies the relationship between man and his environment, favouring the development of man through society and society through man" (Faure, 1974, apud. Iacob, 2005).

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Education synthesizes and organizes the characteristics of the environment and thus exercises a social function, mediating between man and environmental factors. The child, through education, internalizes values, norms, models that will be externalized later, through different behaviours. The formation, but also the development of the human personality, therefore, represents an oriented, organized and conscious process through education, which acts as "a special mechanism for reducing the unpredictability and increasing control over the process of individual development." (Jacob, 2005, p. 29).

Education depends on the other two factors of human development (heredity and environment), representing "the link between the development potential (proposed by the individual's heredity) and the environment's offer of possibilities", "without having unlimited powers (it cannot "rebalance" a deeply affected heredity and cannot even compensate for a totally disharmonious environment - hunger, violence, uncertainty, pain, abandonment), education acts programmed and with knowledge in the sense of individual development." (Jacob, 2005, p. 30).

In agreement with numerous pedagogues who support the imperative role of education, we emphasize the idea of the primary factor of this specialized, organized and programmed human activity in human development.

The forms of education are represented by the ways in which the education process is carried out (Crețu, 1999, p. 26):

- formal education (the term has its origin in the Latin word *formalis* which means "organized", "official"): the education process takes place within educational institutions, based on specialized programs carried out by education specialists, with clearly established objectives through which the development of skills and attitudes is aimed at the acquisition of knowledge, necessary to facilitate the process of integrating the individual into society; an important aspect of formal education is the assessment, which is a process by which the acquired knowledge is related to the initially established objectives;
- informal education - is a process through which the learner assimilates norms, values, models, knowledge necessary for social integration, but it is not carried out in an organized and clearly structured way; this form includes socialization and acculturation phenomena, as well as social actions with educational results (at the level of the family, community, social groups, mass media, etc.), also fulfilling an important role in shaping consciousness;
- non-formal education (the term finds its origin in the Latin non-formalis taken with the meaning "outside of officially organized forms for a certain type of activity") is achieved through educational actions, training and learning networks organized outside the education system, representing a way to satisfy social and individual needs to perpetuate learning.

Both informal and non-formal education are complementary to formal education, often offering alternative solutions for psycho-individual development (Crețu, 1999, p. 26). The instructive-educational activity takes place within the school institution and represents a systematic, planned and organized action, which requires qualified staff, adequate learning spaces and a didactic context that establishes complex pedagogical relationships. The two essential dimensions of the educational process are

teaching and learning, which justifies the use of the phrase instructive-educational process, but also the concept of formative-informative process (Macavei, 1997, p.178).

In accordance with the National Education Law no. 1/2011, the Romanian educational system is regulated by the Ministry of Education, being organized on two levels: pre-university and higher education (higher university studies).

Pre-university education is structured in 5 cycles: preschool, primary cycle, secondary education, high school cycle, professional education (which can replace high school or continue after high school), post-high school education. Each level of education has its own form of organization and is subject to the legislation in force. Preschool education is optional between 3 and 5 years, while the last year of kindergarten, the large group, is mandatory from 2020. The preparatory class, which became compulsory in 2012, starts around the age of 6. Starting from 2020, all four years of high school are mandatory (the obligation ends at the age of 18); thus, schooling is mandatory for 14 years in total. Primary and secondary education is divided into 12 or 13 grades.

In Romania, higher education was reorganized in accordance with the principles of the Bologna process, which aims to establish the European Higher Education Area. Higher studies are structured on the following four levels: bachelor's studies lasting 3-4 years (exception, medical and pharmaceutical fields, higher studies 6 years), for most subjects 3 years, master's studies lasting 1-2 years, for most specialties 2 years, doctoral studies last at least 3 years and continuous learning (postgraduate courses, lifelong learning). Bringing up the term instructive-educational process, we must also refer to the concept of didactics or the theory of the educational process. As Elena Macavei points out, didactics represents the fundamental pedagogical science, "distinct among the sciences of education" (Macavei, 1997, p.178).

According to Ioan Nicola, didactics studies "the educational process through the prism of the relationship between teaching and learning, between the pedagogical behaviors of the subject of the action (the teacher) and the response methods of its object (the student) in order to ensure harmony between them" (Nicola, 1996, p.334). We mention general didactics, as a branch of pedagogy, as well as applied didactics, such as: preschool, school, university didactics, etc., didactics of teaching aids, didactics of teaching subjects (methodology), etc.

Sorin Cristea states that modern didactics represents the educational process as a teaching-learning activity, a situation in which the primary role belongs to the teaching staff who is no longer just a transmitter of information, but becomes the manager of the educational activity. It is centered on the correlation between the initial teaching action and the subsequent or simultaneous learning action, focused on achieving the educational goals, the desirable crystallization of the learner's personality.

Postmodern didactics notes another extremely important dimension of the educational process, which is defined on the axis of teaching - learning - evaluation, activity focused on objectives and which aims to achieve the pedagogical correlation between objectives - contents - methodology - evaluation (Cristea, 2000).

The features of the instructive-educational activity, as specified by Miron Ionescu, are the following:

- activates the interaction of the educational binomial (teacher-student);

- transmits a didactic content that becomes a carrier of educational messages;
- pursues the motivation of the educable by making them aware of the established educational objectives;
- is based on certain didactic principles and norms;
- uses specific didactic methods, means and strategies;
- it is guided by educational goals that materialize in school performances that will be evaluated (Ionescu, 2003).

According to Ioan Jinga, the educational process represents "the ensemble of organized and directed activities that are carried out in stages within a specialized institution, under the guidance of a person trained for this purpose, in order to fulfill certain instructive-educational objectives" (Jinga, 1998, p.182).

If this process is approached from a managerial perspective, then Sorin Cristea considers the education process to be "the main subsystem of the education system specialized in the design and achievement of general, specific and concrete pedagogical objectives that can be operationalized at the level of the didactic/educational activity carried out, by rule, in the school environment"(Cristea, 1998, p.374).

The same author offers us a narrow, pedagogical definition of the content of the educational process, namely: "the set of pedagogical values selected from all fields of culture, in terms of knowledge and abilities with maximum formative effects - intellectually, morally, technologically, aesthetic, physical, cognitive, affective, action/psychomotor - designed at the macro and micro-structural level (ideal, goals, general and specific objectives), achievable in the teaching-learning-evaluation activity, in the concrete conditions of each cycle and collective pre (scratch). post(school), (post)university" (Cristea, 1998, p.65).

The educational process has a double character, on the one hand formative-informative, but also instructive-educational, the two dimensions acting together, in a unitary whole. As Elena Macavei claims, the informative character consists in the transmission of knowledge, the formation of skills and habits (Macavei, 1997), and training is "always a consequence of information and a basis for its further realization" (Nicola, 1996, p.343). The educational process is instructive because it "mobilizes, orders and disciplines the intellect" (Macavei, 1997, p.192), having a maximum role in the formation of the educated person's personality.

The instruction-education unit represents a primary condition of the education process for the fulfillment of the educational ideal which "consists in the free, integral and harmonious development of human individuality, in the formation of autonomous personality and in assuming a system of values that are necessary for personal fulfillment and development , for the development of the entrepreneurial spirit, for active citizen participation in society, for social inclusion and for employment on the labour market" (National Education Law, 2011, art.2, paragraph 3).

1.2. Educational offer and labour market requirements

The relationship between the educational offer and the labour market can be studied from several perspectives, looking at social, economic or political aspects. Each mentioned perspective highlights various characteristics that interrelate the respective

field: economists emphasize the effectiveness, productivity and quality of the work performed by individuals with different levels of educational and professional training, specialists in the social and human sciences are more interested in aspects related to territorial, social and professional mobility, of occupational prestige, of the imprint of social origin on the educational and socio-professional path of the population.

Specialists in education sciences pay great attention to the correlation between the contents transmitted at each level of education and the current and perspective requirements of the labour market, while political scientists focus on governmental measures at the macroeconomic level, on the directions promoted by international bodies to which a country has joined or will join, the role that the school has in maintaining and transmitting the culture and values of a country, in achieving the educational ideal.

Considering the objectives of this paper, those theories and approaches that will facilitate a better analysis of the relationship between education and the labour market in Romania are brought into discussion.

The analytical perspectives of the relationship between school and professional training and the labour market, which are presented in this work, describe aspects of interest from a social and economic point of view. Within these two approaches, numerous theories are included, but only those that best reflect the situation in our country will be mentioned. Among the theories that are included in the economic analysis perspective of the relationship between school training and the labour market, we mention the theory of human capital, the theory of adequacy or coupling and the theories based on the signal model, for example, the theory of statistical processing of the signal. (Nauze-Fichet, Tomasini, 2002).

In the opinion of Pierre Doray and Christian Maroy, the relationship between education and the labour market can be illustrated through different perspectives of a sociological nature; for example, it can be approached as a structural type relationship, a relationship mediated by social play, the education-labour market relationship as mutual causality and societal effect or as constructive negotiation.

Regardless of the perspective from which the interaction between school training and insertion in the labour field is approached, the need for adequate correlation between educational supply and labour market demand is evident, and these trends can be observed through repeated attempts to adjust and update the system of education in our country, in accordance with the demands of social actors active on the labour market.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research on the objectives of school training and placement in the labour field was carried out in the framework of a larger study, and the research method used was the questionnaire-based survey, this tool being widely used in studies in the field of social sciences, especially when the aim is to outline the respondents' opinions and motivations towards a certain aspect of social reality.

Because we wanted to capture the researched phenomenon from a double perspective, 2 structured questionnaires were designed, elaborated for each of the social

categories whose opinions we wanted to perceive: the student respondents, but also their legal representatives.

The target population for the conduct of this research is represented by people from Valea Jiului, and we followed the completion of the structured questionnaires by the student subjects, as well as by the legal representatives of the respective children, based on their willingness to participate in this study.

The field stage of the research ended with the completion of 392 questionnaires. After the stage of verifying the collected data, 374 forms were validated, filled in by the social actors involved, more precisely, 187 students from the middle school or high school and 187 legal representatives of the children.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

Starting a professional activity, after completing the schooling stage, represents an obvious objective that facilitates the social integration of an individual. Therefore, we tried to find out if there is a strategy in terms of school preparation and employment projection, highlighting both the point of view of the student respondents and the opinion of their representatives.

Almost half of the responding students (46.5%) declare that they intend to pursue higher education, as we can see in figure no. 1, made on the basis of the collected data. An explanation in this sense could also be found in the idea that, in traditional Romanian society, a higher school education was a guarantee of success in life; thus, in the rural environment, the priest, the teacher and the mayor were models for the inhabitants of the respective community, they had the highest level of training, which gave them social prestige. In other words, the expression "have a book, have a share" is still somewhat topical, although the meaning of this phrase has changed its meaning over time. At the end of the 19th century, in Transylvania the expression "you have a book, you have a share" appears with a totally different meaning than the one we give it nowadays: "in the past, the land book meant the ownership of a property or a parts of it. As time passes, following the association between books and learning, this saying acquired a new and totally different meaning from the original one, referring to the benefits that education brings", explains Anton Hadăr in an article from *Education Tribune*.

The percentage remains high in the case of those who aim to complete high school or post-high school education (43.3%), without necessarily aiming to pass the Baccalaureate exam, while 8.6% of the student respondents want to complete professional training and only 1.6% want to limit themselves to secondary school studies. In other words, at least declaratively, the aspiration level of the students is high and does not stop at the lower education cycles. It should be mentioned the relatively low percentage of those who want to pursue professional education, even if professional scholarships are granted during schooling and the labour market is affected by the low number of qualified workers, due to them going to work abroad, in the conditions where from the banks few skilled workers were launched in previous generations.

The percentage is even higher in the case of student representatives regarding the projection of the higher education of those they represent, in their opinion 49.7% of the children want to complete a higher education level, according to the data presented in the second figure.

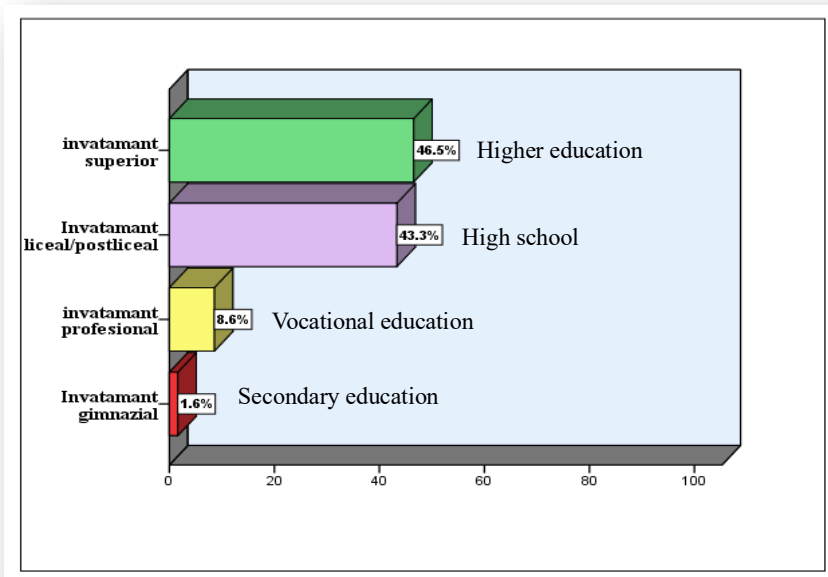


Figure 1. Student objectives regarding the proposed schooling level (student subjects)

As seen in figure 2, more than a third of the adult respondents (36.4%) believe that the objective of those they represent is that the school preparation leads to the graduation of high school or a post-high school, almost a tenth (9.6%) believe that they will complete a vocational school, and 4.3% of student representatives state that they will only complete the cycle of secondary education.

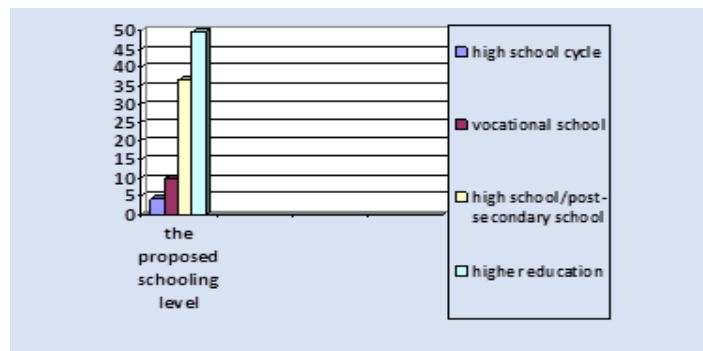


Figure 2. Students' objectives regarding the proposed level of education (opinion of student representatives)

We observe, therefore, that the expectations of legal representatives are slightly increased in terms of higher education (49.7%), but the percentage is slightly lower in relation to high school or post-high school studies (36.4%). We also note slight differences between the opinions of students and their representatives regarding the level of professional education (9.6%) or the secondary school cycle (4.3%), which can lead us to the hypothesis that sometimes the parent is not very well informed about the child's school situation, the motivation of it for learning and of its real potential. So, the increased level of aspiration is projected for their children by their representatives, without this being correlated with the students' school results or the intellectual effort put into acquiring their knowledge, skills and abilities.

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Very many of the student subjects currently have no projection regarding the field or space in which they will be active, which is understandable because about half of them are still enrolled in secondary school and have not discovered their professional interests; therefore, 38.5% of the students answered that they had not decided or had not yet thought about whether they would like to work in the country or abroad, while only 16% answered that they would stay active in Romania, which is illustrated in figure 3.

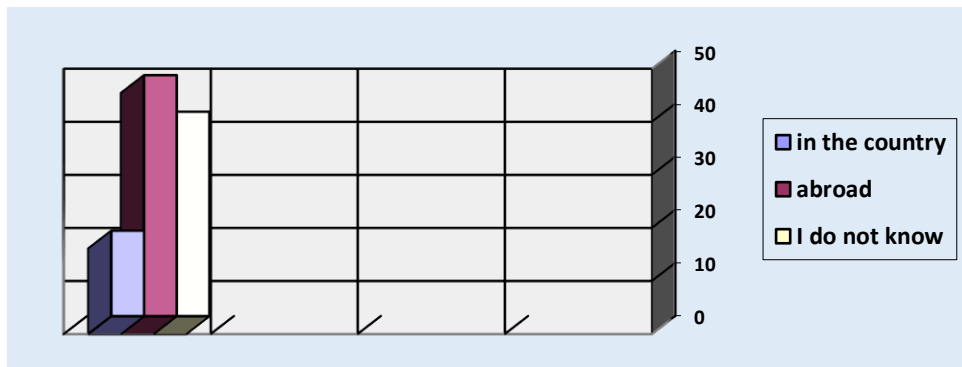


Figure 3. Enrolment in professional activity (student subjects)

The percentage is extremely high for those who stated that they would like to work abroad: given the highly publicized model of going abroad, 45.4% of the student subjects realize their projection regarding employment outside the country's borders. If some of the undecided will also opt to work abroad, the amount of those who will leave the country is extremely high. If we consider that those who intend to leave represent

qualified or highly qualified labour force, taking into account the percentages of those whose objective is to complete high school, post-high school or higher studies, the projection of external economic migration implies very high costs for Romanian education, followed by loss or non-use of trained human resources.

The opinion of the student representatives regarding their employment in the professional activity, after the completion of the proposed school training internship, can be viewed in figure 4.

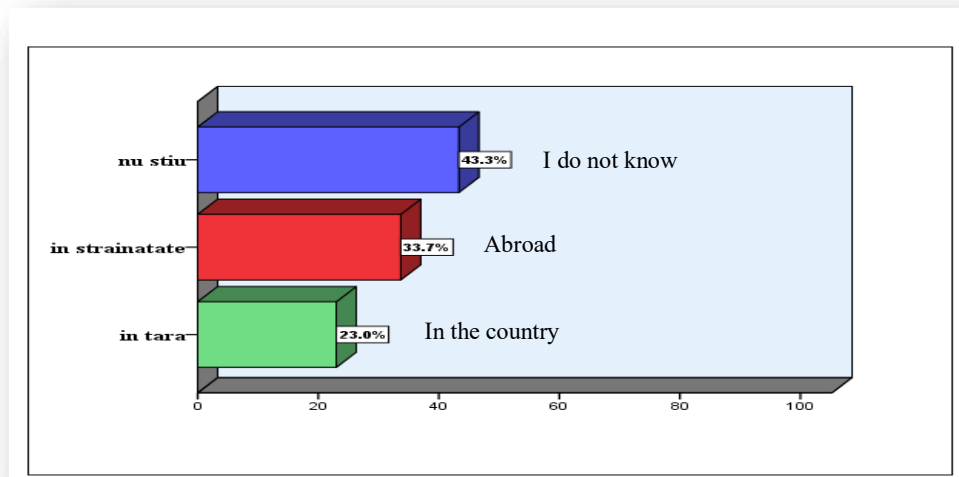


Figure 4. Inclusion in the professional activity (student representatives)

The parents of the students or their other legal representatives, respondents to the questionnaire, have different opinions compared to those of the children they represent: summarizing the answers, almost a quarter of the students whose parents went to work abroad will stay to work in the country (23%), approximately one third (33.7%) will opt to go outside the country's borders, and 43.3% do not know what decision they will make in relation to entering the professional activity.

It is very likely that some of the parents consider that it is premature to have a discussion with the child regarding his professional setting, and in other situations, some aspects of the communication between the adult and the child do not reach the most effective levels, therefore the expectations and the projections of the students are different from those of their representatives.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Analysing the data collected following the application of the research tool, it is observed that both the majority of students and their representatives have as a projection a medium or high level of academic preparation. In a country where education has been underfunded for years, and the educational system is in continuous reform, facing shortages and permanent challenges, the belief still persists that there are more chances

to succeed in life if there is a foundation of good school training, which highlights, once more, the primary role of education in human development.

In a country with a labour market intensively affected by external economic migration, many social actors who will seek insertion in the labour field realize their projection regarding employment in professional activity outside the country's borders. This fact shows a severe lack of communication and collaboration between the main factors that intervene in the relationship between education and the labour market, respectively, between the educational institutions and the employers who will absorb the future workforce. In these conditions, it is necessary for all involved and interested social actors to reach a common denominator in order to develop the best strategies, to obtain effective and long-term results, for the benefit of the whole society.

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