

# **Analysis and evaluation of professional insertion determinants for academic education graduates - Private study: marketing specialization -**

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*Abstract.* The professional insertion is understood as a thematic research field, within the analysis of relations between education and the labor market. It covers not only the access to the workplace with all its characteristics and constraints, but also the performance dynamics and personal and professional satisfaction of the graduates of an education form, but also the recognition of their professional capacity by the employers. The professional insertion is a process that includes different “actors” (graduates, employers and trainers). For founding efficient macroeconomic strategies, in the developed countries, the professional insertion of the youth made the object of numerous researches and specialization studies through which we try to analyze the determinants of the transition routes of the youth from school to active life and to identify new means of training, adapted to a social environment continuously changing.

Such a research, based on the stimulation of communication and exchange of relevant information between the academic education system, marketing specialization, and the labor market, for a correlation as efficient as possible of the requests and needs of the labor market with the objectives and results of the marketing educational offer, is currently performed in Romania by a pluridisciplinary team of 7 institutional units, under the coordination of the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest – the Faculty of Marketing. The authors of this report attend, either as managers/project responsables, either as members of the mentioned pluridisciplinary research team.

Our article approaches the distinct way regarding the direct research, through a pilot-poll, on a sample of master students, having as central objective knowing their perceptions regarding the capacity of the national educational system to prepare them for the requests of the labor market in marketing field. The paper is a synthesis of a study elaborated based on the CNMP project no. 92-103/ 2008, within Program 4 – “Partnerships in priority fields”.

*Key words:* socio-professional insertion, transition from school to active life on the labor market, determinants of the socio-professional insertion

## **1. Introduction**

The socio-professional insertion designates the process that leads to the integration of a person in his social or life environment and in the labor environment where he will work [1]. A successful socio-professional insertion is translated by a

satisfactory integration for the person itself and also for the society.

In the context of the two major phenomena the humankind deals with today – the globalization of markets and fast development of new technologies in numerous fields of human activity – the socio-professional insertion draws more and more the attention of the occidental countries, becoming a

priority preoccupation of the governmental institutions of each country. Indeed, the difficulties numerous segments of youth deal with in the transition process from school to an aspired workplace, according to their professional identity for which they trained, weight dangerously over the social cohesion on the level of a country and on its economy by social expenses which they imply engraving the public accounts. Altogether, one must not ignore the fact that these difficulties have indirect repercussions over the level of labor productivity.

We must highlight, as an assertion, the fact that the process of socio-professional insertion of the youth is a complex process. This complexity is given by the influence it exerts over the process of inserting numerous determinants (influence factors, direct or indirect), in their multiple interactions.

The specialty literature in this field is rich, many authors being interested, over the years, in the socio-professional insertion, and a few of them were tempted to develop models trying to explain the impact of the determinants system of professional insertion over the success of the transition from school to active life on a labor market: [6], [3], [1], [7] etc. The transition from school to labor designates the insertion process on the graduate's labor market, respectively of the youth that left the education system. Within this process, the youth achieve the first experiences of professional integration, even if they finished their studies [4].

Our article is structured on three sections: (1) a synthesis of the current stage of the conceptualization of theoretical knowing of complex matters of the socio-professional insertion process; (2) several reflections over a pilot-field research on a specialization field of the Romanian academic economic education – respectively marketing specialization and (3) the general objectives specific to a performing educational system from the perspective of insuring the transition from school to active life on the labor market, without over-victimization or over-responsibility of the young graduates.

Regarding the section two of the article, we mention that the field research is part, as competent module, of a scientific research project that is currently performed in Romania by a pluridisciplinary team formed of 7 institutional entities, under the coordination of the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest – the Faculty of Marketing. The research project, that is performed during three years, regards a specialized educational field, that is the marketing. The purpose of the research is the stimulation of the communication and the exchange

of relevant information between the educational marketing system and the labor market, for the correlation as efficient as possible of their requests and needs with the objectives and results of the respective educational system. The assumed result within the research project will concretize in creating an interactive, complex and multidisciplinary online service that will function as an interaction environment for three fundamental pillars of the marketing activity: 1) the educational system, 2) the socio-economic organizations and 3) their employees with attributions and knowledge in marketing. This electronic platform will insure the direct connection of the universities in Romania involved in the education in marketing field, allowing them to present their educational offer, own achievements in the field, research and development perspectives and directions, to organize courses, debates and conferences online.

## 2. Theoretic context of monitoring and evaluating the socio-professional insertion process

Today, **the socio-professional insertion process is more and more difficult** under the pressure of certain environmental factors, among which are: economic restructuring and evolutions, under the conditions that the turbulences on different markets became normal [5]; new forms of employment, generated and supported by NTIC; the increase of unemployment among young people; the extension of the transition duration from school to a workplace.

It is appreciated that the transition from school to active life on the labor force market became complex, fragmented, extended as time, with a pronounced individualist character, depending more on the individual qualities/skills [8]. Moreover, for the description of the more and more sinuous routes of the youth, in 2000, OCDE adopted **the concept of "routes"**, to insure the comparability between countries, by describing the means of forming and organization of labor market. It is ascertained, as a tendency on world level, a predominant of the nonlinear or complex transition, young people experimenting chaotic transfers between different occupational statuses after leaving school, multiple interruptions, occupation changes or returning to school after entering the labor market [10]. Thus, we go from the linear transition, respectively from direct "smooth" transfer, without major interruptions or returns, specific to classic transition, to the nonlinear transition, when young people choose

their own transition routes, being influenced by public authorities, employers and their own families. In time, on global scale, **four models of transition from university to a workplace** developed: the Japanese model, the German model, the French model and the American model [9]. **The Japanese model** is based on direct linear transition: school education – labor, with training in the workplace. On the labor market, the Japanese companies recruit graduates, without a specific training or on a specific job. **The German model** considers the theoretical training combined with the practical training, this is why it is called dual or alternative. It insures a continuous training, on high qualification levels, but the training is slow. **The French model** is based on a professional training within the school environment on a formal principle that corresponds to the hierarchical levels of employment with the level of training that best corresponds the needs. It makes the professional dimension secondary, advantaging the general knowledge. In **the American model** all students benefit of a common training until the end of the secondary studies, the practical and the theoretical training being combined. The transition towards employment is made within the high educational frame preceded by expensive courses [2].

Under the new highlighted environmental conditions, that led to the replacement of the classic/direct transition model – school-work – with an indirect (dual) transition model, school and work being allowed to supersede for certain periods of time, alternating unemployment or inactivity, the design of some models to identify the interdependent and complementary dimensions of any successful professional insertion or reinsertion becomes opportune. Such attempts to model the determinants of the professional insertion are found, as mentioned in the introduction of the article, in the specialty literature. Most of these models and most of the performed scientific researches consider either the psychological factors, or the sociological or socio-psychic factors.

Allard and Quелlette (1995) have a meritorious attempt, proposing a macroscopic model of the determinants of the socio-professional insertion. The model allows an ensemble approach of the investigated phenomena, without its essential components being neglected by this. The three subcomponents/dimensions that relate in the configuration of the model and which serve, on their turn, to group the factors with direct or indirect impact over the socio-professional insertion are:

**1) The sociological dimension**, given by the economic, politic, cultural, demographic and

geographic factors, which can directly/indirectly affect the dynamism and the “health” state of a region. It is obvious that the existence of certain governmental policies favorable for the economic reviving of an under-privileged region, for example, will shorten the professional insertion period on the labor force market.

**2) The socio-psychological dimension**, including all microsystems that can directly/indirectly influence the socio-professional insertion of a young man: familial environment, educational environment, working environment, friends’ network. The quality of the lived experiences, as well as the successes in these environments develop and favors positive attitudes, professional aspirations, realist perceptions, which facilitate the transition from school to the workplace.

**3) The psycho-professional dimension**, valorizes the four components: a) personal identity (trust, autonomy, initiatives, identity, intimacy); b) professional identity (the identification with the statute of a worker of a certain profession, achieving the fundamental customs of the respective profession, achieving an identity as employee in a professional structure, becoming a productive person); c) preparing the socio-professional insertion (achieving knowledge, skills and conducts for the explicit purpose of applying them in a concrete demarche of socio-professional insertion); d) proper demarche of socio-professional insertion (with the aspects and effects of success/failure).

We can highlight, therefore, that the value of such a model is given by the dynamic perspective and the interactionist perspective through which they integrate the sociological and socio-psychological dimensions of the environment with the psycho-professional dimension of the individual, all acting synergetic on the success of the process of professional insertion. However, the authors of the model highlight that their demarche is neither final nor complete. We consider that the model must be remembered as theoretical reference point and we appreciate it can constitute a challenge for its adaptation to the conditions of an emergent country, such as Romania.

### **3. A few reflections regarding the pilot-poll among master students and doctorate student within UVT**

#### **3.1. Some aspects related to the methodology of performing a pilot-poll**

The knowledge society actually means the production of knowledge (scientific research),

appropriation of knowledge (education), and the use of the knowledge (economy), but especially it means their unity, their interdependent action in a coherent system, in networks where we can simultaneously find innovation, learning and activation of the ideas. In the context of the methodology promoted by our research project, two polls will be performed during this year among: 1) employers, in order to identify, mainly, their expectations and attitudes regarding the educational offer and 2) the students (bachelor's degree cycle), master students and doctorate students, in order to obtain an image of their level of competences (among which we mention self-affirmation in professional situations, communication and teamwork...).

For the preparation of the two polls, a pilot-poll was performed, executed in November 2009, among 30 master students within the Faculty of Economic Sciences of "Valahia" University of Targoviste, one of the seven institutional entities involved in the elaboration of the Research Project. The pilot-poll pursued the validation of the questionnaire model that will constitute the instruments for primary information collection through the two field researches on a representative sample of graduates on the level of the country. Our report shows, in a succinct formula, certain aspects arising from the processing of information collected in this pilot-poll, with relevance for the approaches theme: the socio-professional insertion of the students (1<sup>st</sup> year) of master courses, with initial training (1<sup>st</sup> cycle – bachelor's degree) marketing specialization.

From the theoretical point of view, in the elaboration of the questionnaire there were four concepts – A, B, C, D – of the educational process, from the perspective of the interest for the research that will be performed.

**A. Vision.** It represents the image resulted from the ensemble of factors generating the success in life, reported to the factors that condition the success in business.

**B. Personal subjective factors.** They refer, on one side, to the expectations, and on the other side, to the motivations of the students.

**Students' expectations** will be valorized by:

- aspirations regarding success in life;
- expectations regarding the faculty (the quality of the academic training, the way it responds to the exigencies the student considers important for his professional life);
- the capacity of assuming responsibilities, risks and trust in own strength.

**Students' motivations** will be valorized through questions such as: Are the students motivated?, Are there currently in Romania

important things that could insure them a life worthy of their aspirations: money, relations, healthy and coherent business environment, good academic training...?.

**C. The faculty.** Regarding this component, through a series of questions, the relevant problems in the field of the quality and coherence of the educational offer with the request of the labor market will be highlighted.

**D. Behavior.** Representing, in essence, everything a person thinks, does, performs and wishes, it will be studied through a set of questions that highlight the interest, wishes, preoccupations of the students regarding CDI, entrepreneurial training that insures them the integration in the business environment.

The field research has, as basis, **two alternative working hypothesis:**

1. **The hypothesis of "knowledge":** the students' opinions are formed reported to what they know it is happening in the respective field; obviously the level of this knowledge is conditioned by the performance of the academic education institutions in the direction of involving the students in research activities to learn to create knowledge through such an activity.

2. **The hypothesis of "non-knowledge":** the opinions of the students are formed as a result of not knowing a field; it is obvious that when the students are not trained in research activities, the lack of interest and not knowing will register in very high shares of the ones who will answer the questions related to the research with variant answers of "I don't know" or "I cannot appreciate".

### **3.2. The synthesis of evaluating competences achieved in the first three years of academic education (1st cycle – "bachelor's degree")**

The opinions of the interviewed persons referred to the degree in which the first cycle in the LMD structure (Bachelor's degree – Master – Doctorate) currently prepares the professional structures that generate, on their turn, inputs for the research on the labor market in our country. The sample of the pilot-poll included 30 students in the first year of the second cycle – advanced master – within the Faculty of Economic Sciences of "Valahia" University of Targoviste. All respondents graduated the Faculty of Economic Sciences, "Marketing" specialization. Considering the matter debated by our article, but also its limited space, we will hereinafter refer only to two questions of the used questionnaire that required the interviewed persons, for the list of basic

necessary components so that, after graduation, they can develop their activity according to the marketing specialization, to appreciate, on one side, the degree

the faculty insures the conditions for achieving these competences, and on the other side, the level of control they reached for each competence (table 1.).

Table 1. The structure of the interviewed master students' opinions, on one side, depending on how they appreciate the necessary conditions for achieving basic competences are fulfilled, and on the other side, depending on the level on which they evaluate the control of each competence

Basic competences	in percentages (%)				
	The conditions for achieving competences are greatly insured	The conditions for achieving competences are insured on a small scale	Competences on the desired level	Competences on satisfactory	Need to improve competences
<b>■ Technical competences</b>					
1. Knowing the subject					
2. Knowing the theories and techniques adequate for the professional career	76,7	23,3	30,0	46,7	23,3
3. Skills for preparing the objectives	56,7	36,7	6,6	56,7	36,7
4. Skills for research	46,7	53,3	16,7	50,0	33,3
5. Skills for using NTIC	53,3	43,3	16,7	33,3	50,0
	60,0	40,0	13,3	70,0	16,7
<b>■ Competences in business field</b>					
6. Understanding the business environment					
7. Understanding the organizational conduct	66,7	33,3	10,0	43,3	46,7
8. Skills for performing the cost-benefit analysis	63,3	36,7	6,7	46,6	46,7
	46,7	50,0	10,0	36,7	53,3
<b>■ Interpersonal competences</b>					
9. Skills for asking questions					
10. Presentation skills	60,0	33,3	23,3	43,3	33,4
11. Relations creation skills	60,0	36,7	26,7	43,3	30,0
	66,7	23,3	33,7	36,6	30,0
<b>■ Intellectual competences</b>					
12. Skills for information research					
13. Skills for information systematization	70,0	26,7	46,3	30,0	23,3
14. Observation skills	66,7	23,3	36,7	33,3	30,0

15. Skills for formulating a vision about a business	66,7	30,0	36,7	43,3	20,0
	63,3	23,3	36,7	33,3	30,0

On the question „Do you consider that the faculty will insure all conditions for achieving the basic necessary competences so that, after graduation, you can develop your activity in the field you are training for?”, the answer variants were: „Yes, greatly”, „Yes, on a small scale” and „No”. It is contoured, as a general appreciation, that in principle, the conditions for achieving basic necessary competences for the development of an activity in the marketing field are insured by the faculty, thus:

**1) The basic competences for which their achievement conditions are preponderantly insured “greatly”:**

- Knowing the subject: 76,7%;
- Skills for information searching: 70,0%;
- Understanding the business environment: 66,7%;
- Skills for relations creation: 66,7%;
- Skills for information systematization: 66,7%;
- Skills for observance: 66,7%;
- Understanding organizational behavior: 63,3%;
- Skills for vision formulation.

**2) The basic competences for which their achievement conditions are insured in greater proportion “on a small scale”:**

- skills for objectives preparation: 53,3%;
- skills for performing the cost-benefit analysis: 50,0%.

The answer variants for the question „Evaluate your basic competences, in the structure of question 17 (previous) achieved within the education form you graduated (1<sup>st</sup> cycle – bachelor’s degree)” were: „No problem (I reached the level I proposed)”, „Satisfactory”, „I could use improvements” and „Definitely must be improved”. The evaluation of the interviewed persons highlights that the education form “advanced master” they attend (2<sup>nd</sup> cycle – two years) is more than opportune to continue the process of consolidating the professional identity by

increasing the degree of controlling those competences estimated as, at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle (Bachelor’s degree), in the stage of “need to improve” or “definitely must improve”:

- Competences in business field: 46,7%-53,3%;
- Research aptitudes: 50%.

Altogether, the continuation of the process of achieving basic competences on a very satisfactory level (corresponding to the variant “no problem, I reached the level I proposed”) is imposed, during the two years of the cycle “Advanced master”, if we consider the high shares of the ones who appreciated that they are still just on “satisfactory” level for many competences (especially technical competences and the business competences).

**4. General objectives specific to the success of the socio-professional insertion process of the academic education graduated in Romania**

**4.1. Internal context**

The reform of the Romanian academic education bears the seal of radical changes and transformations which Romania went through beginning with 1990. After signing in 1999 the Bologna Declaration, Romania became a member of the “Bologna Process” that wishes to configure, until 2010, the European Space of Academic Education through new changes and transformations, among which we remind: changes in the institutional profile of traditional universities, especially by diversifying the study programs; the coexistence of pluridisciplinary universities with universities focused on a more restrained disciplinary field; the apparition of certain organizations that administer study programs offered by foreign universities in different formulae, of cross-border or no border type. This external dimension, instituted by “Bologna Process”, regards the integration of the Romanian universities network in the European Space of Academic Education. The European Space of Academic Education has as objectives the promotion of student and professor mobility, of the possibilities of employment, of the European quality and dimensions, of attractiveness and competitiveness.

Next, we present a few key-ciphers about the Romanian academic education, with relevance for the matters related to the process of insertion of graduates on the labor market [11]. Thus:

- Today, the Romanian academic education is structured on three cycles – bachelor’s degree, master and doctorate – according to the Bologna process;
- The registration rate of the academic education increased from 27,7% in the academic year of 2000-2001, to 40,2% in 2004-2005 and 51,7% in 2007/2008, as a result of the development of the private academic education system, of the development of the academic networks, as well as the increased interest for this type of education; in the academic year of 2008/2009, the number of registered students was of 891 thousand persons, of which 480 thousand persons in the public education institutions, in comparison to the level registered in the year of 2001/2002 of 572 thousand, respectively 425 thousand students;
- The graduation rate (with or without final studies examination) dramatically increased from 25,9% in the academic year of 2001/2002 to 65,1% in the year of 2007/2008, as a result, mainly, of the change in the structure of the academic education by implementing the Bologna process;
- The share of population segment with superior studies (academic) of the total of active population (15-64 years old) reached in 2008 (4th trimester) 15,4%, in comparison to 10% share registered in 2001;
- The young people between 15-24 years old continue to confront the greatest difficulties in the professional insertion of the total of active population; for example, the fact that one of four young people (respectively 24,5% of the young people with academic studies) who finalized an academic education form do not have a job seriously raises a question mark regarding the efficacy of the Romanian academic education.

Regarding the marketing field/specialization, the private field of our investigation, from the analysis of certain secondary sources of information regarding the 22 public academic education

institutions having this specialization in their offers, we can draw a few relevant conclusions to characterize the quality level of the educational process currently reached in Romania: there is a diversity of study programs formulae for marketing, as distinct field in the academic offer; the virtual community – through web pages – as it is currently performed by the universities submitted to the research highlight the disparities regarding the attractiveness of different study programs, with negative impact perceived on the level of the beneficiaries of such information; there is a gap between the requests of the standards and those of the reaching the performance indicators imposed by the Methodology of the Romanian Agency of Insuring Quality in the Academic Education and the existing practices, very heterogenous.

#### **4.2. General specific objectives that must sustain the process of inserting young graduates on the labor force market in Romania**

For the period 2008-2013, through the Sector Operational Program “Development of human resources”, two general specific objectives were set for the academic education:

- The amelioration of the systems for insuring the quality by supporting universities for improving the management and the capacity of supplying the qualifications relevant to the business environment in continuous change;
- Supporting the achievement of academic competent knowledge by young researchers, formed in the national network of doctorate schools, by extending opportunities for doctoral and post-doctoral studies.

For the fulfillment of these objectives, we consider:

- The elaboration, implementation, update and monitoring of the National Frame of Qualifications for Academic Education, through which we recognize the attestation of the results of learning expressed in the terms of sub-competences and competences; it is foreseen that until 2015, approximately 90% of the Romanian universities will receive accreditation through the new standards of quality insurance;

- The creation, implementation and permanent update of the National Registry of Qualifications of the Academic Education for certified qualifications.

## 5. Conclusions

The rate of insertion of the graduates of an academic education form (calculated as share of the graduates who found a job in one year since the graduation/finish of studies) is a synthetic evaluation indicator for the external efficiency of a national education system, but in the same way it offers an ensemble image over its adaptation degree on the level of development of the labor force market and of the request for a certain level of training.

The process of socio-professional insertion of young graduates in the third education (academic) represents a great challenge for the network of universities in Romania, confronted with an extremely fast increase of the students' body, without the reforms indispensable to this section being finalized.

The systemic analysis of the determinants of the socio-professional insertion process reveals the fact that the national education – as important sector of the public interest services – will not find the answers to the questions the youth asks by itself, which requires the elaboration of certain strategies on the level of the macroeconomic (governmental) decisions which facilitate and sustain the cooperation in practice of all actors involved in the transition of young graduates from school to the workplace.

The success of certain models of the process of transition of graduated from school to the active life is conditioned by observing a set of principles that must be recognized, in fact, as premises of the strategies that will be promoted through a reform program of the educational system, as it is the case in the present time, for the Romanian education system in full reforming. Such a set of principles is proposed by J. Masdonati [7], principles we consider generally valid for any national education system whose purpose is to monitor and evaluate the process of socio-professional insertion of graduates on the labor force market. The four principles (thesis) we refer to are:

- 1) The process of transition of graduated from school to active life on the labor market must be approached in an interdisciplinary manner, even trans-disciplinary, and to require the dialogue between

all actors involved in the success of this process.

- 2) The process of socio-professional insertion on the labor market, being a process of adaptation to permanent changes of the educational offer as response to the modifications of the labor force employers' requests, are proprietarily centered on the segment of young graduates who must exceed eventual obstacles that inherently appear, under the pressure of the external environment factors (especially the globalization of the markets and the NTIC impact).
- 3) The success of this transition process depends on the creation of psycho-social conditions and identity conditions that allows young people not only to insert themselves on the job market, but also to keep themselves on it.
- 4) The evaluation of the success of the socio-professional insertion process on a labor market must be performed based on qualitative and quantitative criteria, following, in equal measures, the result on long term of the process, that is the quality of keeping in a formation, even in the same workplace.

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