

THE SITUATION OF GRADUATES IN THE LABOR MARKET

**Szűcs Enikő, Assist. Prof., PhD and Tolnai Timea, Assist., PhD Candidate, "Partium"
Christian University of Oradea**

Abstract: The primary role of higher education institutions is to provide an educational system that meets the requirements of the labor market so as to be consistent with the requirements of career for young graduates. Therefore, it is important to know how well the university can respond to these demands, expectations. This formed the basis of research made among social science graduates from Partium Christian University, Oradea. This study is based on the results of previous research in this area, focusing on the main features of training and employment opportunities. The main objectives of the research and of the study are related to graduates position on the labor market, their professional choices, further studies and the difficulties they have encountered. All this information can be useful in the development and improvement of university education in the social sciences.

Keywords: higher education, graduates, employment, labor market.

Over the years, in the case of post-communist countries, we have seen many changes about the situation of employment structure and economic and social system as well. The transition of the young people from the educational system to the occupational system has become more and more influenced by the new features of the labor market. (Chisholm, 1999).

The success of young people depends on the quality of the education they receive in institutions, even if they public or private, of the knowledge gained, but also other factors related to the candidate's personality, his skills. Aware of this and aiming their main role, universities are trying to satisfy the requirements and offer a suitable education.

There have been many researches on these questions, some of which focus on changes in the educational system (introduction of Bologna system), others on labor market insertion of graduates.

The results of a national level research conducted in recent years (2009 - 2012), shows that most of the graduates start looking for a job after graduation. However, the economic and financial crisis has generated changes in this regard, as we see an increase on the number of students who start looking for a job even before graduation. (Graduates and the labor market /Absolvenții și piața muncii, 2012)

All research aimed at the situation of graduates on the labor market, their professional route, the skills and competencies needed to get employed, and other factors that concern their situation, have been made in order to get useful information on the development and improvement of educational institutions and system. This formed the basis of research conducted among graduates of social sciences at the Partium Christian University, Oradea conducted at the Department of Social Sciences.

About the research

To have an overview of the situation of graduates, the Department of Social Sciences initiated a research among Social work and sociology graduates. To obtain the desired

information and data, we used two research methods. One of them is an online survey among graduates in social work and sociology, about their insertion in the labor market, the level of satisfaction with their current job, their professional future projects. The second method is a focus group interviews among university teachers and the potential employers, on their views on the training system and methods used, their ideas on facilitating employability of graduates.

The research was conducted among social work and sociology graduates in the period 2007 – 2013. In the process of contacting the graduates and applying the questionnaire, answered 67 graduates in social work and 43 graduates in sociology, in total 110 young people, including 92 women and 18 men.

The Partium Christian University

“The Partium Christian University continues the centuries-old tradition of the Transylvanian Hungarian university education. It is the first independent, accredited university of Transylvanian Hungarians since the changes in 1989.”(PCU, Mission statement 2012)

Founded in 2000 by the Pro University Partium Foundation, Partium Christian University from Oradea is the institutional successor of Sulyok István Reformed College, established in 1990. The mission of the College, and later the University as well, is to contribute to the promotion and development of culture, education and science - specific Hungarian community in Romania.

Partium Christian University is an accredited private university established by Law no. 196 of 21 October 2008, and according to this, the University „is an autonomous Hungarian higher education institution, and an independent legal entity of public benefit with private status” (Art. 1).

Regarding the mission and the objectives of Partium Christian University, they are liable didactic (teaching) and research. The main role of the University, like all universities, is to prepare the students to participate in social life, to educate them, to become a well-trained and competitive human resource that can face the demands of the labor market.

As a young university compared to other universities in the country, accredited a few years ago, Partium Christian University in Oradea is particularly interested in get a clear image of the extent to which he satisfies the requirements of career and requirements labor market, especially the regional ones. (Flora, 2013)

However, since this is an institution that has undertaken the mission to ensure the Hungarian community in Romania specialists with higher education, competitiveness at home and abroad, in an education system in the mother tongue present a special importance how the University is perceived in the community, social and linguistic background most of its students.

In this context, the University needs as more accurate and detailed information about how the language skills of its graduates allow them to integrate into the labor market, given that the learning process is used as both Romanian and Hungarian language. (Flora, 2013)

The results

This study refers to the situation on the labor market of the social work and sociology graduate of the Partium Christian University, Oradea based on some of the research results developed by the Department of Social Sciences.

The research was conducted among graduates of the 2007 – 2013 periods. During this time, 151 young people graduated the social work specialization, of which 92% were presented at the graduation exam, obtaining a BA degree. Regarding the field of sociology, from all of 107 graduates 74% obtaining a degree.

The access of graduates on the labor market is highly influenced by their level of education, by the diploma obtained. This educational system is divided into several stages of training, so of course they will have a higher level of education, those who besides the basic specialization (BA) will follow master courses (MA).

The target group of our research has advantages and good possibilities in this regard. Since 2009, the graduates of social work and sociology have the possibility to continue their studies within European social politics master study, at the Partium Christian University that means they have the opportunity to continue their studies in a familiar place.

For that when preparing the questionnaire, we considered important to ask for information on the continuity of studies of any type of training. The results revealed that 13% of respondents performed a second BA education; while 20% of graduates completed or currently follow some master programs (17% of them attended master studies at PCU).

The data confirms that graduates of social area need further development to cope with the duties and requirements of the labor market, which is not surprising concerning how large is the area of activity they have chose. Therefore we consider being positive the desire and involvement of youth in continuing their vocational training.

Regarding the employment of graduates, of those who responded to the questionnaire, 28% said they had a job corresponding to the profession for which has been prepared (two thirds of them are working in social work). In the case of social work graduates, the mentioned jobs are: social worker, counselor for labor and unemployment, social referent. In the case of sociology graduates the field of activity is not as obvious as in the case of social workers. Thus, we consider being the domain jobs such as development agent, public institutions advisor, career adviser, local expert on Roma issues, spokesman, expert reviewer marketing, human resources specialist and public relations specialist.¹

Equally important, as the level of employment of graduates is to identify the knowledge acquired during university and that prove to be useful in the employment. The answers shows that social work graduates have used psychological knowledge, theoretical knowledge of social work, social policy, law, management, sociology and child protection. The sociology graduates have used professional practice, methodological knowledge and statistics of SPSS.

60% of the graduates considering an advantage that they have the opportunities to do the university education in their mother tongue, because they can learn easily, however, also

¹ The specific work areas were mentioned by the graduates, and are in accordance with the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education and Classification of Occupations in Romania-COR (see http://www.rubinian.com/cor_1_grupa_majora.php or http://www.rncis.ro/portal/page?_pageid=117,1&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

the results also showed that 56% needs to have knowledge of the Romanian language because they are using it every day.

The majority of respondents (69%) think that it would be necessary to develop the Romanian language teaching at university level, however, on their own admission, half of them speak very good in the Romanian language.

Regarding the time of employment, 18% of graduates held a job before or upon graduation, 64% were able to find a job within three but no more than six months and 12% of unfortunately failed to get a job.

From the received results, we highlighted the factors considered important in finding a job in their professional field. In the opinion of the graduates, the employers put focus on professional qualifications (34,6%) and existence of relations (19,2%) and professional experience (14,5%). 17,3% mentioned the “other” categories, meaning: pleasant appearance, adaptability, knowledge of several languages (those of international use and also Romanian language), the remaining 9,6% said they don` t know, or they don` t work.

As it resulted from the focus group interview involving representatives of employers, the integration opportunities and career development of graduates depends largely on the social recognition of the profession, job stability and the financial and moral rewards related. It is also important in the opinion of the employers, to have professional relations that can help the graduate in performing tasks. They argued that the existing of professional relations can have decisive character in the hiring process. Employers have also pointed out the importance and benefit of professional experience in getting a job.

Looking ahead, as in any other field, in the case of social science graduates, is a moment, when they decide to change their job. In the case of our respondents the job change intention appears in 44% of the cases.

The reasons for job changes: the lack of financial motivation (43%), as an important role in satisfaction of needs, defines the terms of employment, the way people live. 29% of the respondents considered that is important to work in their study field, because the proper motivation leads proper work. 14% of the graduates wants to change their jobs because of the negative work atmosphere, and 10% had no advancement opportunities, which we believe is important because it provides an opportunity for self-realization, creativity, and can act as a driving force.

The last issue concerns the situation of graduates the labor market is including their suggestions made in the direction of the university to improve the existing education system and in the direction of current students, to give them some helpful tips for to get employed on the labor market.

The responses showed that the graduates considered to being helpful for the actual students:

- to learn all the theoretical staff, and participating to the courses and extra curricular events
- in the case of social work students they considered necessary to be involved in voluntary work,
- the students has to try getting more professional experience,
- they need good communication skills, and also had to develop this skill,

- carry out further trainings after graduating.

From the interviews we found out that the employers consider to be necessary to have some skills and abilities that can facilitate the entry of students into the labor market, such as:

- communication skills, and language competence (Romanian and foreign language),
- professional knowledge,
- regularity,
- charity, humility, and
- preparedness.

The suggestions to the university made by the graduates in order to improve and develop social work and sociology specializations to ensure better adaptation to the needs and demands of specialized labor market:

- Graduates considered important to ensure diverse practice sites and increase the number of partnerships in the development of this activity
- They believe it would be beneficial to increase the hours of practice
- Propose extension of periods of practice, introducing group exercises and tasks in professional practice
- Graduates believe it would be useful and help in the training of students, the organization of several conferences
- In order to facilitate the entry of young people into the labor market, the respondents believe it would be beneficial if the universities would give a helping hand in this regard, through the mediation of employment, whether full-time or part-time.
- They mentioned that the development and updating of the library is one of the important tasks of the university.

Conclusion

The purpose of the survey was to collect information on the situation of graduates in order to improve the development process of the educational offer, both in terms of training as training social workers to sociologists.

We can say that there is a match between the expectations of graduates beside university and the level of professional skills and knowledge followed by employers.

For social work graduates and for sociology graduates too, the entry on the labor market must have certain theoretical and practical knowledge without which they can not stay employees.

Graduates suggested curriculum development by introducing new disciplines and subject areas (such as communication exercises, case studies and solutions).

The graduates proposed the development of the practice / field work, by increasing the number of hours allocated to practice. Also in this direction would be beneficial the diversification of partnerships.

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