Questionnaire on Analyzing the Degree of Satisfaction Regarding the Professional Skills of the Graduates as Perceived from the Employers’ Perspective

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Abstract

The present study is a sequel of the studies on following of the high school and university graduates’ professional itinerary, as a part of the “The correlation of the graduates’ competences and knowledge with the desiderates of the labor market” research project, coordinated by the Marketing Faculty of the “Dimitrie Cantemir” Christian University.

The intention of this study is analyzing the correlation degree between the graduates’ professional training and the employers’ requests in what regards the increase of the enterprise’s performance, on the one hand and the increase of the graduates’ insertion on the workforce market or the work satisfaction, on the other hand.

Keywords: Performance firm, performance employee
Introduction

The necessity of this study was triggered by a reality of the Romanian workforce market: the high number of graduates who find it more and more difficult to find workplaces on the labor market, many of them practicing a series of activities which do not correspond to the domain they graduated in. Therefore, some of them end up working on the black market or even leaving the Romanian workforce. The issue that appears is related both to the professional domain of the graduates and to the current state of the workforce (which is under pressure), as a result of the workforce demand which is inferior to the workforce offer. The pressure state of the workforce market is a natural consequence of the Romanian economy’s general situation. Its production and consume capacities are becoming lower and lower, being determined by the severe economic recession, on the one hand and by the irrational allotment of economic resources or the low degree of their use in the economic activities, on the other hand.

This study underlines the employers’ demands regarding the profile of the future employee, aspects related to the graduates’ both theoretical and professional training, also taking into consideration the practical or specialty training, the participation at internship programs (approached in intensive and extensive terms).

The questionnaire includes a number of 18 questions applied to a number of 200 firms from various activity domains: production, services, constructions, consultancy and transportation.

1. Do you declare yourself pleased with your employees’ general preparation?

The employees’ professional training represents a major interest for the employers, its quality being directly reflected over the company’s performance, the employee-employer good relationship, the growth of the employee’s work’s productivity, which constitutes a positive influence at the level of both the company’s costs and wages.

The analysis of the questionnaire’s data regarding the satisfaction degree of the employer in relation to the employees, 69% of the employers declare themselves to be satisfied with the employees’ general preparation, 23% declare to be partially satisfied and 8% of the employers declare to be unsatisfied.
2. What are your employees’ positive and negative aspects in relation to the degree of professional training?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features regarding the professional training</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adaptability</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good theoretical training</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>efficiency</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor training</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional training</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teamwork</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unreliability</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The main aspects taken into consideration by the employers in relation to the employees’ training degree vary according to the specificity of the delivered economic activity, the exposure to risk and uncertainties, the relations with the company’s external environment, the company’s aperture to the external environment and the economic governance.

The employers’ interest is that of creating a cohesive and dynamic work team which could be able to adapt to the inherent changes of both external and internal business environment, reflecting itself in the company’s profitability and competitiveness.

37.6% of the questioned employers appreciate the employees’ adaptability to the company’s internal and external environment, 32% of the employers consider that the employees’ professional training does not fit the company’s requirements and to the rigors of the labor market, 12% of the employers underline the employees’ ability of working in teams, 9.6% of the
employers consider appreciate the employees’ professional training especially from a theoretical point of view, 4% of the employers consider that the employers show a good theoretical preparation, 2.4% of the employers appreciate the efficiency of the employees’ work and only 1.6% of the employers consider that experience is a positive feature of the employees.

3. Do you consider that your employees’ knowledge is enough in order to develop the company’s activity?

Generally, the activity of a company is closely related to the employees’ efficiency, it is mainly derived from the professional training, work motivation, the system of assessing the employees’ efficiency from both a pecuniary point of view and that of various rewards or stimulants.

In the present study, 88% of the questioned employers consider that their employees’ knowledge is sufficient in order to correspond to the company’s needs, 6% of the employers consider that the level of their employees’ knowledge is not sufficient or does not fit the company’s requirements.
4. To what extent does the knowledge gained in school help the employee to fulfill the work tasks?

The Romanian educational system is focused towards the direction of gaining general knowledge, the specialization degree of the professional training being perceived as a niche educational system (being specific to advanced, postuniversity studies).

The employer is interested in the fact that his employee should be able to prove the fact that he possesses special competences, specific to the study field and to the activity field that of which he wants to become a part. Therefore, it is necessary to highlight the idea that the
insertion on a specific labor market has to be the corollary of the professional training, a continuation of the professional training begun in high school and at the University. This leads to high professional skills.

The analysis of the questionnaire’s data shows that the employers consider that the professional training helps the employee to fulfill his tasks to a small extent (66%), insufficiently (14%), to a big extent (12%) or the professional training is redundant (8%).

5. Which are your employees’ most common lacks that should have been corrected by the educational system?

The employers consider that the practical experience is the employees’ main lack (63%) and that it should have been corrected inside the educational system, either by increasing the number of lectures allotted to practical training or by participating to internship programs. Other elements which can be perceived as minuses of the employees regarding their capacity of adapting to the economic environment, having to be diminished by means of the educational system, and which have been identified in the questionnaire by the employers are the following: communication (16%), responsibility (8%), discipline (6%), seriousness (5%) and specialization (2%). These elements advanced by the employers can be explained by means of the lack of a formal frame in which students could be attracted to develop practical activities which are based on raising their awareness over a process of decision-making under risk and uncertainty conditions, the communication inside a work team that militates for common objectives, establishing tasks (by a group leader who should be able to offer students discipline and seriousness in approaching the company’s current problems).
6. What do you consider to be the employees’ main lacks or deficiencies?

Employers face the problem of their employees’ behavior, attitude and professionalism deficiencies, these lacks being directly reflected over the company’s performance and internal environment, including the relations between the employees, on the one hand and the employer-employee relation, on the other hand.

In what regards the answers of the interviewed employers, 46% of them consider that their employees have as main deficiency that of adapting to the company’s management (strategy deficiencies), 41% take into consideration the communication deficiencies and 13% the behavior deficiencies.
7. Do you consider the relation between the theoretical training and the practical one developed by the university curricula as being optimal?

The answers of the interviewed employers show the fact that the relation between the theoretical training and the practical one developed by the university curricula is an optimal one (73%), proving that it is not the university curricula the one that disadvantages the graduate, but the quality and the structure of the practical training. This thing can be fixed by means of the participation at the practical training of professionals coming from the business environment in order to share their personal experience and to promote and even teach some good practice examples.
8. To what extent did the university curricula accentuate the theoretical character of the professional training?

The analysis of the data presented in the questionnaire highlights the following aspect: the apparently contradictory questions create the impression of a conflictive situation that has to be solved by the entrepreneur: is the professional training the cause of a low insertion of graduates on the labor market or is it the lack of appropriating those competences that are directly subordinated to the practical training and the participation to training activities and internships? From this point of view, the answer to this question wants to highlight one of the two sides of the educational process: the theoretical side and the practical one. Therefore, employers consider that the university system is not characterized by a focusing on the theoretical part of professional training (68%), affecting the practical training, only 16% of employers consider that the focus is oriented towards the theoretical training, 10% of respondents consider that the theoretical training is not sufficient and 6% consider the theoretical training to be redundant.

9. To what extent have the practical skills and abilities been developed inside the university curricula in order to serve to the increase of your employees’ productivity degree?

The employers consider that the university curricula do not sufficiently develop the skills and practical abilities that would contribute to increasing the efficiency of the employer company (73%). From this point of view, it is necessary to reinvent the concept of the future graduate’s practical training concept, oriented towards gaining abilities and competences related to the employers’ requirements, the tendencies of labor market’s development and that of economy, in general, by taking into consideration these occupations that are correlated with scientific research and technological progress.
Only 10% of the questioned employers appreciate the graduates’ skills and practical abilities developed inside the education system and applied to the company’s requirements, 12% consider them insufficient and 5% of the respondents consider them redundant.

10. Would you be willing to accept students’ internship activities inside your company in order to increase the school curricula’s applicability degree?

Most of the respondents show that they are interested in a partnership with the universities in what regards the development of internship and practical training programs (80%) and this thing would represent the basis for future projects of universities and the business environment, allowing students to benefit from the specialists’ expertise and companies to transmit to universities their requirements in relation to the profile of the graduate. The European higher education develops the principles of university governance in which the university-companies partnership is developed in order to satisfy the student’s expectations and the interest in relation to both the business environment and the employing necessity.
11. Do you consider necessary developing teamwork activities in the educational system in order to increase employees' work efficiency?

Teamwork represents the best method used in order to underline a series of features of an employee: communication, sharing knowledge in order to increase the team’s efficiency and performance, identifying the strong and weak points of the activities developed in order to achieve the team’s goal, identifying the members that do not contribute to the team’s efficiency and taking measures for increasing their motivation and determination, choosing the team leader who will have to coordinate the activity in order to achieve the company’s goal. From this point of view, the questioned employers consider that teamwork is a very important factor in determining the employees to increase the company’s efficiency (82%) and only 18% of employers consider that their employees haven’t yet developed this concept.
12. Do you consider that your employees are characterized by teamwork capacity and the affiliation to the enterprise’s organizational culture?

The questioned employers consider that 78% of the employees possess the ability of team-working, which implies a high motivational degree of the employee in relation to a sense of belonging to the company’s organizational culture; 16% of employers consider that employees have an insufficient capacity of team-working while 6% show that employers do not possess the ability of team-working and do not correspond to the company’s organizational culture.

The company’s organizational culture includes all that means collective thinking standards, attitudes, values, beliefs, rules and customs that exist in a company. Inside the company’s cultural component we can distinguish visible, perceptible elements (common behavior and language, rituals and symbols) as well as less visible elements, intuitive ones, generated by perceptions, myths, customs related to empirical standards about what means working well and acting correctly. The organizational culture is determined by repeated interactions between the organization’s members, by gathering the beliefs and values of its members although there are strong modeler factors that particularize it, such as: management style, decision making style, formalism level, organizational structure, policies and know-how.

Employers select their candidates by also taking into account the predictable degree of adaptability and integration in an already formed organizational culture. Hence, as a result of an experience inside a company as a student, during the specialty training or the internship the future employee can intuit which are the company’s ethical values and regulations that could facilitate and assure an understanding climate.

Entering a company without knowing the organizational climate, rules, customs, the employees’ attitudes and beliefs could create a series of aversions from the part of the newly came employee in relation to the company, which diminishes its motivation, work capacity and ability to adapt to the company’s requirements. Due to these elements, practice and any process of getting to know and understand a company’s functioning system even as a student
represents a real step forward for the student who wants to work in a field where he has abilities, competencies and knowledge.

By means of determination and good practice examples coming from the part of the company’s management, the employees gain a feeling of belonging to the organization, of being interested in what regards the company’s degree of market competitiveness, which strengthens the quality of employer-employee relations.

13. Do you consider these management methods as being opportune for increasing your company’s competitiveness and quality?

![Pie chart showing responses]

The participative management is much more innovative and creates the employee a sense of group affiliation, which determines the employees’ motivation towards quality work and reaching their goals. Therefore, 82% of employers appreciate as being opportune the participative management’s methods in order to increase the company’s competitiveness and activities’ quality, 10% of employers do not consider these methods opportune and 8% consider them insufficient.

14. What recommendations would you propose to the university management system in order to increase the degree of adapting the university training to the requirements of labor market?

As specified in the analysis of the questionnaire, the employers have the expertise and knowledge necessary for intervening in the educational process in order to increase the practical abilities and capacities in relation to labor market’s requirements. Hence, by creating partnerships with the private and public business environment, students will gain skills
regarding the corporative governance, the company’s social responsibility and participative management.

The following elements are a result of the employers’ answers regarding the recommendations made to the university system for increasing its degree of adaptability to the labor market’s requirements: 44% of employers consider necessary increasing the number of practical training hours, 37% of employers propose prevailing the practical activities inside the university curricula, 17% consider specialty studies necessary and 2% recommend universities a higher seriousness degree.

Employers’ recommendations to the university environment

- Predominant practical activities: 37%
- Specialty studies: 17%
- More frequent exams/A higher degree of seriousness: 2%
- A higher number of training hours: 44%
15. Do you consider this questionnaire opportune?

Most of the respondents appreciate this questionnaire as being opportune (94%) which signifies the importance that employers give to the manner in which their employees are trained in order to enter the labor market.

16. What is the attribute used in order to define this questionnaire?

The questioned employers consider the questionnaire as being informative and objective (33%), interesting (13%), satisfactory (11%), innovative (5%) and necessary (4%). We should appreciate the manner in which employers have been open to making this questionnaire, appreciated the graduates’ activity at its true value and proposed method for revising the university management in relation to the labor market’s trends and requirements. This fact is even more positive if taking into consideration the idea that employers are those to collect the results of
the graduates’ education and its quality or superficiality are the elements that determine the following aspects: life quality, work quality, economy’s overall efficiency (on short, medium and long term).

17. The company’s activity field

When making the questionnaire we took into consideration a considerable number of companies (200) with various activity fields. Therefore, a great majority of the questioned entrepreneurs belong to the following activity fields: transportation (68%), trade (18%), consultancy (9%), the other domains having a low number of respondents: constructions, installations, services, collector firms (1%). It is interesting that the structure of respondent firms’ activity overlaps that of the national economy in what regards the economic activity’s input to the Gross Domestic Product, on the one hand and these activity fields’ coverage degree with trained personnel.

18. The company’s employees number

When analyzing the respondent companies’ employees’ number we took into consideration the taxonomy of enterprises according to the employees number from the field literature, at a national level. Therefore, in what regards the number of the analyzed companies, we observed a high number of small and medium enterprises (86%), followed by large enterprises (13%) and only 1% of them were microenterprises.

This distribution proves that small and medium enterprises represent an ascending competitive activity sector, selecting its employees according to their studies’ performance and quality, proved by the productivity increase brought to the company.
Conclusion

As a result of the researches made among students and employers during the internships we have identified a series of requirements coming from the part of employers referring to the students’ professional experience and to adjusting the university curricula in order to increase the insertion degree on the labor market and the graduates’ performance inside the real economy.

The Romanian university studies still have a mainly theoretical character, which diminishes the young graduate’s capacity of adapting to the labor market. This implies the necessity of a higher number of practical training in the specialty fields, internships participation, volunteering programs that aim at developing practical skills and abilities, group communication and team work.

The employers feel the need of an adequate specialization in relation to the labor market and economy's trends. This aims at both the process of saving, as a result of the training hours during the trial period specific to the beginning of the career and the process of efficiency, a trained graduate, with practical skills, specific to their activity field, being desired by any employer.

The employer’s recommendation for the university environment is that of adjusting the curricula, including a reasonable number of practical training hours especially during the final years of study, signing partnerships with the business environment in order to create favorable premises for the student in what regards the process of adapting to labor market’s specific requirements. as a result of the fact that students face difficulties in what regards the
employment process, of the economic delays existing in specific labor markets, the employers’ intention is that of applying strict selection methods in order to select those employers whose competences will contribute to the increase of the company’s performance and competitiveness.

By means of this research study, students can analyze the employers’ recommendations, their expectations in relation to the selection and employment processes, the intention being that of motivating and determining students to train in an efficient way, in consensus with the labor market’s trends. Moreover, students must take into account the dynamics of labor market and economy, the elements that recommend a continuous learning and specialty training process, one that has to adapt to the mutations specific to labor market, research and technological progress.

References


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