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Article

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Between Covering the Basic Needs and Self-fulfilment Jobs – Why We Need a Better EU Strategy for Employment

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Abstract:

This article tries to present two distinct concepts in relation to labour: basic-needs jobs and self-fulfilment jobs. Those two concepts should be taken into account when designing and envisioning EU work strategies.

Keywords: employment strategies, basic-needs job, self-fulfilment job

1. Introduction

Labour together with capital and resources constitute the primary factors of production. Of these, the labour force has the greatest dynamism, on which the accumulation of capital depends most, given that resources are limited. At the level of a country, the level of training of the labour force represents the mirror of economic and social development, respectively it contributes to the economic competitiveness of the country on the international level. Thus, investment in the training level of human resources contributes to increasing economic competitiveness from the smallest SME to the largest multinational. In this context, the professional training of young people is the first and most important step toward access to the labour market. The development of practical skills among young people, starting with the preparation of students in order to facilitate the transition from school to the labour market is the basis for having a balanced society, with a low unemployment rate and with a high added value regarding the services and goods that are produced.

To be competitive a nation must have highly skilled labour rather than cheap labour. Beyond the fact that an unemployment rate as low as possible represents a desire at the level of any nation, access to the labour market represents a desire at an individual level starting from a certain age. At the individual level, access to the labour market does not only provide an income, that is, the person in question can satisfy his primary needs, but can also ensure the need for self-realization. On the opposite pole, the lack of a job can have negative consequences on a psychological and even physical level for the person concerned. Thus, facilitating the access of young people to the labour market should be a priority at the government level, as the young people of today are the adults of tomorrow who contribute to the development of society and the retirees of the day after tomorrow who must be supported to enjoy a decent living towards the end of life.

Restricted/difficult access to the labour market can lead to alienation of the young person from his family or community, which is often associated with drug use, alcohol abuse and the adoption of violent, desperate behaviour [3]. Furthermore, the lack of a job can have a negative impact on the level of the young person, to the level of the whole society: low socio-economic and cultural participation, non-involvement in the decision-making process at the political level, there is a risk of drug abuse, alcohol, violence, become on social assistance, may live in squalid conditions, may affect the ability to start a family, as well as future earnings. A young person who is long-term unemployed or who fails to get a job that matches their skills or to keep it for a longer period of time can subsequently become a burden on society [3].

2. Between basic needs and self-fulfilment jobs

A job paid accordingly to professional education and experience is the first step towards financial independence, which is the basis of the transition to adult life and to a fulfilled life, with both material and spiritual satisfaction. Also, a young person who has a job that brings him satisfaction can contribute to the society of which he is a part, from participating in the decision-making process to involvement in socio-cultural life and, above all, at an economic level through taxes and the taxes he pays, as well as by the fact that he brings money to the local or national budget, especially in the conditions in which the state has spent on his education and training in many of the EU countries, such as Romania. Employment and training are interdependent and represent the foundation on which a young person, a family, a community, a society, or a nation develops. Therefore, the employment of young people is a complex field and of utmost importance for the development of society and the individual. We believe that having a job, an occupation is located both at the base of Maslow's pyramid by providing primary needs: food, a roof, etc., but also at its peak by covering the need for self-fulfilment.

According to Maslow's theory, it makes sense for an employee to place an initial emphasis on satisfying the basic-needs of ensuring security and physiology. A person just starting their job will typically be particularly concerned about physiological demands like appropriate pay and regular income as well as security needs like benefits and a secure workplace. Everyone wants to work in a stable atmosphere and earn a respectable wage to support their families.

The employees who do not have their basic needs satisfied will choose their jobs based on factors like pay, stability, and safety. Additionally, when their lowest-level needs are not supplied or are in danger, employees will resort to meeting those needs (such as during an economic downturn) [2].

What no strategy or plan of action takes into account is the fact that for a young person once he has secured his primary needs, the need for self-actualization, for self-fulfilment, becomes more important, consequently prompting him to seek another job that satisfies this need. Thus, at the level of the Europe 2020 Strategy, we believe that it was not enough to set a target regarding employment, but, above all, regarding the quality of employment. In fact, it is the same mistake that happened with the previous European strategy, the Lisbon Agenda. We consider that is necessary to establish a delimitation between having a job that pays the bills and a job that is fulfilling. The first type of job we will name basic-needs job and the second one is a self-fulfilment job.

By basic-needs job, we mean a job that ensures the fulfilment of primary needs: food, a rooftop etc. and which is usually present early in a person's career. A self-fulfilment job is defined as an occupation that satisfies the highest need in the hierarchy of needs, namely, self-actualization, self-fulfilment, and self-esteem, and occurs later in a person's career, after reaching a certain social status and after having ensured a greater degree of financial independence. However, we consider that the two types of employment can be interspersed during a person's career: at first, he is an employee who covers his basic needs, then he identifies a job that he feels fulfils him, that it offers him certain professional satisfactions (self-fulfilment job), but then, due to an economic crisis, for example, he ends up again in the initial situation where he survives from day to day.

Basic-needs employment, in our view, refers to the situation in which an employee, perhaps because of the economic situation, perhaps because of the low level of education or because they are at the beginning of their professional career or, most of the time, also because of low aspirations career, he manages to cover some of his basic, security and physiological needs, as they are presented in Maslow's hierarchy of needs [4].

Employment for self-fulfilment, in addition to covering basic needs through the salary, gives to the employee a certain social status as a professional in a certain field, and a certain degree of financial independence - the employee manages to save, the salary covers his basic needs, but above all, through this workplace, the employee feels that the daily activities bring him satisfaction, the successes at the workplace are part of his person, define him, and now he can, including, contribute to the development of the community from which is a part (through donations, volunteering or even through the work they do).

The employment for self-fulfilment, proposed by us through this article, becomes the aggregator of these desired and the foundation by which the European Commission can recommend to member countries to develop measures to encourage the quality, not just the quantity of job creation and development.

Among the targeted education measures, we propose the development of mandatory career counselling and guidance programs at pre-university and university education levels. A young high school student should be guided in choosing a career path, to understand the advantages and risks of a certain trade/profession, the connection and evolution between the demand and supply of the workforce in that field, as well as the sacrifices they would resort to in order to he gets where he wants to go.

A young student should be able to discern between the need to obtain a qualification/ diploma in the field in which he wants to work, the multitude or, on the contrary, the limited fields in which he can work and the need to equip himself not only with fundamental knowledge through studies university but also the compulsion to acquire practical skills through internships or volunteering programs to carry out consistently and with dedication.

The key concepts for envisioning better work strategies in the European Union are human capital, career counselling, self-fulfilment jobs, personal needs, professional potential, work experience, better matching of skills and competencies, and the need to meet the skills and interests of the employees.

The new EU work strategy should focus on the development of abilities and skills of the youth that will enable them to find better jobs, jobs that contribute to their filing of self-fulfilment.

A report by Eurofound emphasizes that the role of the workplace lies not only in ensuring decent living conditions but above all in offering citizens the right mechanisms to achieve their potential and goals in life. A job is not only a source of income to survive, but offers a certain social status and a role in society to the one who holds it. Thus, people who have a job are more satisfied with their lives, resulting in employment being a milestone for development and well-being [1]. And in our research conducted to write this article, we have come to the conclusion that what is missing from the theoretical and conceptual research on employment policies, is a breakdown by types of employment beyond a dimensioning of employment by seasonal activities, part-time or full-time, etc. The practical applicability of the two concepts defined earlier lies in the fact that once named and characterized, they can represent the foundation that shows the direction of employment measures. Thus, for those who are in the category of the active population, but not employed, the measures should be of a nature to stimulate basic-needs employment, and for those who have a job, measures should be thought through so that they acquire a certain sense of personal accomplishment, that is, measures should be created to stimulate employment for self-fulfilment. It is true that when a nation struggles to provide minimum decent working conditions or when there is fairly high unemployment, the goal of government can only be to provide as many jobs as possible for as many people as possible, to ensure a decent living and to be/ become responsible taxpayers.

3. Conclusions

The distinction between a basic-needs job and a self-fulfilment job is a complex matter. There are different aspects of them, such as:

- the situation when a country has a shortage of personnel;
- the situation of over-qualified personnel and low-paid jobs;
- the situation of inexperienced and unskilled workers at the beginning of their careers who lack formal education as well.

And this list can continue. These are just some of the aspects that a new EU work strategy should take into account when defining work measures, directions and priorities.

In this article, we have presented some considerations regarding the concepts that we have proposed to the scientific community and that we have tried to define and justify as best we could.

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