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Adult Education and Training - A Factor of Economic Development

Livia - Elena VRANCIU¹, Cristian – Valentin HAPENCIUC²

Abstract

Adult education and training is a factor of major importance for the development of the workforce, being the main instrument through which it can adapt to the new requirements of the knowledge-based economy. Improving the position on the labour market through the accumulation of new skills and abilities has a positive impact on the productivity increase of organizations and also on the market share, having as basis the rapid changes in all economic fields.

At the beginning of its activity, adult vocational training in Romania was developing on a superficial and small market. Demand was dominated by the small individual consumer with low solvency, generally influenced by costs and not by quality.

Romania's accession to the European Union and the adoption of European documents in the field of lifelong learning have led to a certain development of the adult vocational training market. Economic changes have highlighted the fact that training is necessary for employed persons to be competent at the workplace.

This paper aims to briefly present the legislative and institutional framework in the field, to analyse the dynamics of the process of authorization of adult vocational training programs from 2004 to 31.08.2016 and also to present a critical analysis of the system of adult education and training in Romania.

Keywords:

Vocational training, economic development, education, training programs, vocational training providers.

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1. Introduction

In Romania, adult education and professional training have been strongly influenced after 1989 by the modifications appeared after the transition from the centralized economy to the market economy. The period of transition registered a major unbalance on the labour market which had as a consequence the appearance and increase of unemployment, the modification of the basic skills, the disappearance of some qualifications and occupations and the appearance of new ones, etc.

The year 2000 marks the improvement of the macroeconomic tendencies through the structural reform, through the openness of the economy and competition on the market, and due to adopting some more balanced and suitable policies. The structural unemployment remained the main cause of a tension on the job market having as consequence the reduction of the active population and the occupied population. These realities of the period justified the necessity of the increase of investment in the continuous professional training.

In this context the Government Ordinance no. 129 from August 31, 2000 on the adult professional training regulated this process in Romania and gave opportunity to organizations to authorize themselves as professional training providers. The authorization process began in January 2004, and by the end of the year 2016, a number of 14.675 adult professional training programs were authorized, according to the National Registry of Adult Professional Training Providers (RNFFPA).

The third objective of the National Employment Strategy 2014 - 2020 proposes: “the development of a human resource with a high level of qualification and skills adapted to the labour market requirements”, and one of the action directions aims at “supporting the continuing adaptability and development of the workforce correlated with the structural changes of the labour market”[3]. Thus, it is emphasized the importance of obtaining skills that constitute a link between people’s needs, the labour market and the employers’ requirements. The correct and efficient anticipation of the requirements of skills represents an essential condition to answer better the demands of labour market. A strong collaboration between the public authorities, the educational establishments, the adult professional training providers and the social partners that can play an essential role in identifying the best solutions related to qualifications is necessary[4].

2. The legislative and Institutional Framework of Adult Education and Professional Training of Romania

The Legislative Framework

The complexity of the activity of adult education and professional training, the economic, social, psychological implications of the phenomenon needed a global approach, needed a global approach, regulated by an appropriate legislative framework. From the year 1999 until now more than 30 legislative documents have been adopted, of which we set forth the most important documents which governed or are governing the adult professional training process in Romania:

- Law no. 132/1999 on the constitution, organization and functioning of the National Council for Qualifications and Adult Professional Training;
- Government Ordinance no. 129 / 2000 on the adult professional training, republished [2];
- Government Resolution no. 522/2003 for the approval of the Regulations governing the implementation of the provisions of the Government Ordinance no. 129/2000 on the adult professional training;
- Decision no. 481/2015 for the amendment and completion of the Regulations governing the implementation of the provisions of Government Ordinance no. 129/2000 on the adult professional training, approved by the Government Resolution no. 522/2003;
- Law no. 279/2005 on the apprenticeship at the workplace, republished in 2013;
- Decision no. 234/2006 for the approval of the Regulations governing the implementation of the provisions of Law no. 279/2005 on the apprenticeship at the workplace;
- Law no. 1/2011 - National Education Law, including subsequent amendments and additions, which in the Title V on the lifelong learning sets the general and integrative framework of lifelong learning in Romania [1];
- Law no. 53/2003 - Labour Code, republished, reunites specific provisions which specify the need of professional training of employees in enterprises, and also the obligation of the employers to facilitate the access of adults to the professional training;

Government Resolution no. 918/2013 on the approval of the National Qualification Framework, including subsequent amendments and

additions, which regulates the organization on 8 levels of qualification of the National Qualification Framework (CNC). The legislative document specifies the way in which the levels of qualification may be obtained (through the formal education and professional training system and through the recognition of the results of learning obtained in non formal and informal contexts, from the perspective of lifelong learning).

Decision no. 567/2015 for the amendment of the Government Resolution no. 918/2013 on the approval of the National Qualification Framework;

Government Resolution no. 1352/2010 on the approval of the structure of the Romanian Classification of Occupations- basic group level, according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations – ISCO 08, including the subsequent amendments and additions.

Government Resolution no. 556/2011 on the organization and functioning of the National Qualifications Authority.

- Government Resolution no. 780/2013 for the amendment and completion of the Government Resolution no. 556/2011 on the organization and functioning of the National Qualifications Authority;
- Emergency Decree no. 96/2016 for the amendment and completion of some normative acts in the fields of education, research, professional training and health.
- The joint Order of the minister of labour, family and social protection and the minister of education and research no. 353/5202/2003 for the approval of the Methodology of authorization of the adult professional training providers;
- The joint Order of the minister of labour, family and social protection and the minister of education and research no. 501/5253/2003 for the approval of the Methodology of certification of the adult professional training;
- The joint Order of the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection no. 4543/468/2004 for the approval of the Procedure of evaluation and certification of the professional skills obtained through other ways than the formal ones;
- The joint Order of the minister of education and research and the minister of labour, family and social protection no. 4543/468/2004 for the approval of the Procedure of evaluation and certification of the professional skills obtained through other ways than the formal ones;

- The joint Order of the minister of labour, family and social protection and the minister of education and research no. 35/3112/2004 for the approval of the Catalogue for Qualifications for which can be organized programs that end with qualification certificates.
- The legislative framework tried to connect all the problems specific to the adult professional training to the regulations on lifelong education in the national and European context.

Following the study of the legal regulations, one can see that the extremely great number of documents determines either the concurrence of the provisions, or the contradiction between the provisions, which is reflected in the low flexibility of the adult professional training process.

- The Institutional Framework

Law no. 1 from 2011, the National Education Law, provides at art. 335: „the state exercises its authority in the lifelong learning field through the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, the Parliament, the Government, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of the Interior”.

But the main role in leading, coordinating and controlling the adult professional training process, as it is defined by the specific normative acts, is held, from the institutional point of view by: the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly Persons, the Ministry of National Education, the National Qualifications Authority, the county commissions for authorization of the adult professional training providers and other specialized authorities and organizations.

3. The Analysis of the Dynamic of the Process of Authorization of the Adult Training Programs within the Period 2004 - August 31, 2016.

Because the statistical data that we had access during the research do not have continuity from the perspective of the number of adult professional training programs authorized according to Law no. 129/2000 on the adult professional training, we present in table no. 1 the dynamic by counties of the authorization activity in Romania, within the period 2004 - August 31, 2016.

Table 1. The dynamic of the activity of authorization of adult professional training programs in Romania, within the period 2004 - August 31, 2016

County	Number of authorized programs within the period 2004-2012	Total number of authorized programs within the period 2013-August 31, 2016	Total
Alba	615	441	1056
Arad	342	137	479
Argeş	613	275	888
Bacău	862	383	1245
Bihor	394	222	616
Bistriţa Năsăud	110	68	178
Botoşani	212	123	335
Braşov	931	458	1389
Brăila	418	148	566
Buzău	391	188	579
Caraş Severin	296	111	407
Călăraşi	354	132	486
Cluj	1205	586	1791
Constanţa	907	481	1388
Covasna	185	72	257
Dâmboviţa	465	335	800
Dolj	710	496	1206
Galaţi	719	354	1073
Giurgiu	93	59	152
Gorj	314	119	433
Harghita	328	158	486
Hunedoara	719	237	956
Ialomiţa	142	48	190
Iaşi	1020	555	1575
Ilfov	198	35	233
Maramureş	630	60	690
Mehedinţi	216	148	364
Mureş	452	102	554
Neamţ	480	198	678
Olt	258	144	402
Prahova	677	308	985
Satu Mare	215	78	293
Sălaj	280	96	376
Sibiu	632	225	857

Suceava	230	104	334
Teleorman	179	225	404
Timiș	992	36	1028
Tulcea	241	120	361
Vaslui	150	55	205
Vâlcea	807	248	1055
Vrancea	242	86	328
TOTAL	19224	8454	27678
Without Bucharest			
Municipality of Bucharest	6338	3048	9386
Total	25562	11502	37064

Source: table made by the authors

In figure no.1 you can see that on the first place is Cluj county (1791 authorized programs), followed by Iași county (1575 authorized programs) and Brașov (1389 authorized programs) and Constanța counties (1388 authorized programs). At the opposite end, with a low number of authorized programs are: Giurgiu county (152 authorized programs), Bistrița Năsăud county (178 authorized programs) and Ialomița county (190 authorized programs). Thus you can see that in the counties in which the economic activity is developed, a high dynamic of the requests of authorization of training programs for different occupations and qualifications is registered, which demonstrates the directly proportional link between the economic development and the adult professional training.

Source: chart made by the authors on the basis of the data from table no.1

Figure no.1. The number of authorized adult professional training programs in the Romanian counties, within the period 2004 - August 31, 2016

4. Evaluations, Proposals, Recommendations

In our opinion, the lack of interest shown in Romania for the appearance and development of adult education and professional training results from the fact that the Government Ordinance no. 129/2000 on the adult professional training was adopted in 2000, but was applied only in 2004 at the insistence of the European Union, in the period before the accession.

The analysis of the institutional and legislative system demonstrates that there was never a truly independent authority to coordinate and control the activity in this field. The two ministries (the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly Persons and the Ministry of National Education) being successively or at the same time in coordination are not directly related to the field, each trying in time to leave its mark on adult professional training, which determined stopping and even blocking the activity.

The present adult professional training system emphasizes too much the procedure and the requirements which must be met in order to authorize, and not the quality of the proper training process and the certification of the obtained skills. In this context, we propose the adaptation of the method successfully used in some European countries (for example Hungary) where there are regional certification centres. The trainees are formed by the providers, but the final exam is organized in these centres. This procedure would guarantee the objectivity of the evaluation, the positive homogenization of the obtained skills, the standardization.

The existing providers on the adult professional training market are, usually, small trading companies or NGOs, with the headquarters in apartments and a reduced number of employees, which identified an income source by organizing the training programs. The big business enterprises in the field are missing completely, unlike in the European states where it is a pride and a quality guarantee to hold a qualification certificate issued by a big company.

In order to increase the quality of the adult professional training process, we consider that a hierarchical classification of the training providers is necessary, that is based on a set of solid criteria (mobilized material and human resources, the obtained performances, etc.) and the authorization to be given for different periods of time (2, 3 or 4 years).

A real problem at present is the possibility of information and documentation regarding the regulations in the adult education and professional training field. The continuous modification of the legislative and institutional system made this approach very sinuous. We consider

useful the setting- up of an official site dedicated to the professional training, in which one can find, besides the normative acts: useful legislation, directives, necessary methodologies and models to draw up the authorization file, the match of the occupational standards with the occupations from COR and the qualifications in the Catalogue for Qualifications, etc.

5. Conclusions

The adult professional training is a learning process that requires acquisition of knowledge, skills, abilities or changing the attitude and behaviours in order to improve the people's performances at the workplace and in everyday life. In a Europe where change happens drastically and regularly, training is necessary in order to develop the human resource that acts in a competent way at the workplace. A general rule says that the training necessary comes from the extent of the changes.

The lifelong acquisition of knowledge and skills represents a fundamental condition for the individual and professional development, for the increase of the employment and adaptability, and the necessity to modernize the education and professional training systems in order to eliminate barriers between different learning contexts and the increase of access and participation in learning constitutes the fundamental premises for the contemporary society.

In order to conclude, it is important to remember that, although the certificates and diplomas regarding different qualifications are often valid for the duration of the professional life of a person, the knowledge, the abilities and the necessary skills on the labour market and in the society as a whole grow rapidly. Consequently, the formal certifications and qualifications, once obtained, are often not enough to ensure the continuous employability during a lifetime. So, ending a formal qualification must be seen at present rather a step on the continuing education scale than a purpose in itself.

In Romania, the adult professional training has begun to develop since 1990, but the participation in this process continues to have very low rates, our country being, in 2017, on the last place among the 28 member states of the European Union with a participation rate of 1,1%. The explanation of this phenomenon may be found in the fact that people understand professional training as a cost, not as an investment in their own development.

In this context, it is obvious the need of rapid and responsible involvement of the decision makers in order to revive the activity and to overcome the very big differences between Romania the European Union

countries, but also each individual, for the change of mentalities, for openness and receptivity to new, so that each adult has continuously the opportunity to develop themselves.

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