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Perspectives on the Particularities of the Process of Ensuring Qualified Work-Force in the Organizations of Bihor County

Review to the Doctoral Thesis of Békési Csaba-Lajos, Entitled „Ensuring Qualified Work-Force in the Organizations. Case Study: Bihor County », Supported in October 2018 at the University of Oradea.

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to "*propose solutions for improving the process of adult training and training programs offered by AJOFM Bihor so as to meet the requirements of the relevant employers in the recruitment and selection process and implicitly to increase the insertion rate on the labor market of jobseekers*" (Békési, 2018: 7). Even from the stage of formulating the purpose of the research, Mr. Békési Csaba-Lajos focuses on the discursive horizon of the applied research, the improvement of the training process being a key phrase that marks not only the construction of the research goal, but the entire discursive horizon of the thesis. The thesis is, therefore, oriented to the *construction of public policies*, the pragmatical overcomes the theoretical, and the innovative, concrete dimension is given by the practical application of the *hic et munc* aspects and the direct results of the research rather than the theoretical one. Deriving from the preference for the pragmatic side with immediate use of research, Mr. Békési Csaba-Lajos defines the research universe in employing organizations as well as in job seekers in Bihor County. The author states that his thesis is primarily intended to respond to "local interest, being important for local institutions involved in vocational training, but also for employers and job-seekers" (Békési, 2018: 7-8). The candidate also notes that the analysis of the adult vocational training system at the level of the European Union and the European and national regulatory framework is to clarify the construction of public policies in the field at European level, but also of the Member States, thus responding to an interest in knowledge more widely, making the thesis likely to raise the audience's interest beyond those of local practitioners in the field of human resources to whom it is most addressed.

Keywords: *qualified work-force; PhD thesis; Bekesi Csaba-Lajos;*

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Introduction

The purpose of the PhD thesis (Békési, 2018) is to "*propose solutions for improving the process of adult training and training programs offered by AJOFM Bihor so as to meet the requirements of the relevant employers in the recruitment and selection process and implicitly to increase the insertion rate on the labor market of jobseekers*" (Békési, 2018: 7). Even from the stage of formulating the purpose of the research, Mr. Békési Csaba-Lajos focuses on the discursive horizon of the applied research, the improvement of the training process being a key phrase that marks not only the construction of the research goal, but the entire discursive horizon of the thesis. The thesis is, therefore, oriented to the *construction of public policies*, the pragmatical overcomes the theoretical, and the innovative, concrete dimension is given by the practical application of the *hic et munc* aspects and the direct results of the research rather than the theoretical one. Deriving from the preference for the pragmatic side with immediate use of research, Mr. Békési Csaba-Lajos defines the research universe in employing organizations as well as in job seekers in Bihor County. The author states that his thesis is primarily intended to respond to "local interest, being important for local institutions involved in vocational training, but also for employers and job-seekers" (Békési, 2018: 7-8). The candidate also notes that the analysis of the adult vocational training system at the level of the European Union and the European and national regulatory framework is to clarify the construction of public policies in the field at European level, but also of the Member States, thus responding to an interest in knowledge more widely, making the thesis likely to raise the audience's interest beyond those of local practitioners in the field of human resources to whom it is most addressed.

The **objectives of the PhD thesis** are directly derived from its purpose, being constructed with a predilection for the improvement of the sectoral public policies in the field of training of the unemployed and the increase of employability of the persons seeking employment in Bihor County.

The objectives proposed by the author of the thesis aim to analyze the process of training of unemployed people and their specific employability in Bihor County. The objectives of the thesis, as formulated by Mr. Békési Csaba-Lajos, are:

- "Analysis of the regulations, policies and strategies of the European Union and its institutions in the field of vocational training and of

the Romanian legislative framework, relevant in the field of vocational training;

• Determining the role of the public employment service in the process of professional training of the labor force;

• Determining the characteristics and specificities of the labor market in Bihor county, in correlation with the vocational training;

• Assessing the ways of providing qualified labor force on the labor market in Bihor county, focusing on the impact of vocational training programs on increasing employability" (Békési, 2018: 7-8).

The proposed objectives are feasible and, in our opinion, were at least partially met during the research. We will return with specific examples as we look at the content of this paper.

Theoretical Approach

The theoretical approach to the thesis is based on the concept of a *learning organization* (Hoffman, 2004) and of *organizational learning* (Harrison, 2005), the author criticizing the above-mentioned theories, especially the first, from the perspective of learning and of the learning style of individuals in the organization. On the contrary, according to Békési Csaba-Lajos, organizational learning theories are more relevant to the human resource practitioner "because it focuses on how the learning process takes place within the organization, although it does not generate actions that lead to learning; this is the attribute of the employees, the company being responsible for creating the necessary conditions and facilitating the training process" (Békési, 2018: 26). Human resource selection theories, such as knowledge management, organizational learning, andragogy, performance management, etc., are summarized but convincing. A wider presentation of some of these, which later underlies the research, could have brought extra clarity, especially for the researcher less familiar with some of them. In the economy of the paper, however, a widespread presentation of terrorism could distract the practitioner - the one to whom research is ultimately addressed - from the understanding of concrete points of evaluation of public employment policies from the point of view of the efficiency of the process employment of unemployed people.

The theory behind the author's entire research approach is the neoclassical liberal one, based on the labor demand-supply dynamics, which takes place in a market where demand exceeds the supply for professions that aim at a higher level of skills and, implicitly, of a higher qualification of the labor provider. In this situation, Mr Békési Csaba-Lajos notes that the

employment decision plays an increasingly important role in the labor selection process and that the mutations in the decision-making process concerning the employment of staff are seen by the doctor as a lack, being little exploited by the sociological literature - at least the national one - in the field of human resources, fact that motivates the author to include this issue in the area of interest of his research, thus making the results obtained have a theoretical relevance for the researcher in the sphere of human resources, beyond the practical one initially proposed by the aim of the thesis we are considering.

Also in the context of the literature, we mention the references made by the PhD student to large-scale research, such as the Adult Education Survey (AES), but also the continuous professional training survey CVTS (Békési, 2018: 43-47). If the claim to study the situation of the local professional training with the theoretical tools developed in the literature that analyzed the local context - Bihor County - seemed to hurt the impediment of a bibliographic insufficiency, the author reviews precisely the sociological researches carried out in the Department of Sociology at the University of Oradea, which is a critical and documentary apparatus for the author's research, pointing to the scientific context in which his research is conducted.

The work continues with an interesting and exhaustive analysis of the normative and institutional framework that regulates the vocational training of adults, both at European and national level. This approach responds to the first research objective centered on "analyzing the regulations, policies and strategies of the European Union and its institutions in the field of vocational training and the Romanian legislative framework with relevance in the field of vocational training" (Békési, 2018: 7). The framework of analysis is the European strategy entitled Europe 2020, which proposes a number of fundamental objectives on lifelong learning, including support for the transition to a knowledge-based economy through research, development and education. Within this strategy, the author refers to the "*Agenda for New Skills and Jobs*" (Békési, 2018: 40), which he analyzes from the perspective of his impact in the construction of national strategies for the development of human resources. In the same context of the Europe 2020 Strategy analysis, the functioning of the main existing institutions at European level that provides for the continuous training of human resources is envisaged.

It is worth mentioning the rich statistical documentation that the doctoral student drew up and synthesized in the paper, and reviewed the

data on adult vocational training in 10 EU member states (Békési, 2018: 47-74).

As far as the national vocational training system is concerned, it is summarized in the second part of the second chapter, the competent institutions, the normative acts regulating the vocational training of adults are presented, all of which are accompanied by a comprehensive statistical analysis of adult vocational training programs at national level, compared to those existing at local level in Bihor county. By analyzing the statistics on adult vocational training programs, especially those organized by AJOFM, as well as by private providers registered with the AJOFM and authorized to carry out such programs, the PhD student answers practically the research objective No 2: "Determining the role public employment service in the process of training the labor force" (Békési, 2018).

Methodological Approach

The **methodological approach** is based on a methodological mix, with both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The paper has a quantitative preponderance, the abundance of statistical data demonstrating the predilection for the quantitative analysis of the PhD student. The practical part of the thesis is composed of several independent but complementary studies. The first one focuses on the characteristics of the labor market in Bihor County (Békési, 2018: 90-107), based on a secondary data analysis, starting from the statistical data reported by the relevant institutions in Bihor County. The analysis aims at identifying the specific structure of the bioregional labor market and the impact of the technology of economic activity in the region on labor market developments.

A second study aims at analyzing adult vocational training at the Bihor County level, focusing on training programs offered by public or private providers. The methodological approach of this study is to *analyze existing documents*, either publicly available or consulted in various local public services, especially within AJOFM. The analysis is predominantly quantitative, the author being interested in the size of the adult vocational training offer available on the Bihor market.

The third study aims to analyze the process of selecting human resources as it appears to both employees and employers in the region. From a methodological point of view, the study is based on the questionnaire survey (Békési, 2018: 124-160).

The fourth study addresses the concerns of the employers, manifested in the Bihor county for the recruitment and selection of the labor force (Békési 2018: 161-167).

The sixth micro-research aims at "determining the specificity of the job search process from the perspective of the job seeker" (Békési, 2018: 168-184), being - methodologically - achieved through the sociological survey through questionnaire.

From a methodological perspective, we consider that investigative techniques are used appropriately and we can trust their validity for the studied population. We appreciate the correct and appropriate use of the sociological specific methodology. A more explicit explanation of the sampling process could have increased the level of confidence in the results obtained by estimating the possibilities of generalizing and extrapolating results from the local Bihor level to the more general level of adult vocational training in the country and in Europe, as well as the existing labor selection strategies at the employers' level, going beyond the local bihorean character.

Evaluating the Results

The most important results obtained by Mr. Békési Csaba-Lajos and which drew our attention were the diagnosis of the bioregional labor market, from the perspective of some indicators such as its particularities according to the type of ownership of the employer, the ways of performance of the bihoral organizations when faced with the economic crisis and crisis management from the perspective of human resources management. From the perspective of the type of employer, the public sector employees have a weight of 33.2% compared to 16.6% of the national share, the state until 2002 being the most important employer in Bihor County. The author considers that: "In Bihor County, the employment rate is above the national level, similar to the European average, thus in line with the objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy, even if the structure of the bioregional economy is not favorable for achieving a high productivity or a high level of the average salary" (Békési, 2018: 100).

Labor productivity in Bihor County is 18% higher than the European average. The result is explained by the "higher number of hours worked, Romania being the first in the EU in 2012" (Békési, 2018: 100), the structure of the economy, the evolution of the exchange rate, but also a more weak "work efficiency in a number of economic activities" (Békési, 2018: 100). As for the share of highly qualified employees, this is, contrary to

initial assumptions, higher in SMEs, this being explained by the share of micro-entrepreneurships set up by highly skilled entrepreneurs to capitalize on their own intellectual capital. These types of results, although obviously dependent on the evolution of the local labor market, can be partially generalized as a form of manifestation of the knowledge economy, the intellectual capital tending to take the place of the financial one, the knowledge society being, in our opinion, on the threshold of the transition to a new way of production, based on the extensive capitalization of intellectual capital in the production of *symbolic goods*, whose consumption requires a certain cultural and symbolic competence.

By such conclusions, although locally relevant, but extrapolable at the level of society as a whole, Mr Békési's thesis goes beyond its own waiting horizon in terms of the possibility of receiving the results beyond the context in which the research was carried out. A wider integration of such results into the theoretical context of the research of the *knowledge society* and of the *learning organization*, the perspectives discussed in the theoretical chapters, would have allowed a more obvious connection between the two parts of the paper and would have provided a greater degree of generalization of results. Of course, our observation does not affect the ideological content of the thesis, but only expresses suggestions for capitalizing the results when they are published in the form of a volume resulting from the PhD thesis.

Another interesting result obtained by the doctoral student is about the employers' choice to hire rather known people, which in our opinion is not primarily a recrudescence of nepotism as an unethical practice in the recruitment of human resources, although it may be partially explained in this way from the perspective public employer, but rather a lack of employers' inclination for risk for human resources. This is correlated with the importance given by Bihor's employers to previous candidates' experience (Békési, 2018: 139).

With regard to *staff training* through various courses and training programs, the results show a lack of interest in apprenticeships at the workplace (Békési, 2018: 156-168), which can be explained to us by the same lack of inclination for risk of employers who consider apprenticeship programs to be at increased risk of inadequate professionalism of young people so trained with evolving job requirements. The risk of training is transferred by the employer to the training providers and, implicitly, to the employees who follow such training programs.

As regards the job-search strategy of the unemployed, it is influenced by the unemployment period, the qualification the unemployed person

holds, but, according to the results obtained by the doctoral student, "the most used method of finding unemployed people of a job is the use of subjects of their social networks (21.66%), made up of well-known people working in certain companies, which provide them with information on available jobs and which, on the other hand, are willing to recommend and guarantee for them to employers "(Békési, 2018: 172). Again, we formulate the suggestion that, when the thesis will be published, the author would emphasize such results as being of interest beyond the regional context in which the research was conducted. In our view, the generalization of these results can be exploited starting from the theorizing of the knowledge society as a society in which social interactions are virtualized and take place within a wide network of interactions (Sandu, 2018, WCP).

The results obtained by the doctoral candidate are true, being in agreement with the statistical data obtained in previous studies and presented for illustration by the author.

The conceptual and critical apparatus of the thesis are suitable for a thesis in sociology, the concepts with which the author operates are defined, either in the introductory part of the first chapter or during the work, when they are used. The conceptual device is rigorously scientific and is used in a manner that leaves no room for confusion. In part, from an excessive pedantry of the author, some passages take a form of didactic writing, in the desire to make the thesis for policy-makers involved in adult vocational training and the integration of the unemployed into the labor market accessible.

The bibliographic corpus is used in a coherent and convincing manner, being formatted in APA style, suitable for research in the field. The bibliography mainly includes reference works in the field of human resources management, as well as normative documents and public policy documents in the field. The information taken from the various bibliographic sources is synthesized by the author, being addressed in a critical manner.

Global Evaluation

Given the many qualities of the paper, of which I mention the importance of the theme, the richness of the documentation and the synthesis of the ideological contents regarding the European and national framework in which adult vocational training takes place, as well as the usefulness of the collected data, the complexity of the quantitative and qualitative analysis, the maturity of the theoretical and methodological

approach, as well as the practical value of the results highlighted, in one word - the scientific merits of the above-mentioned doctoral thesis, I propose granting the PhD in Sociology status to Mr. Békési Csaba-Lajos.

References

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