

# THE INTEGRATION OF YOUNG ECONOMISTS ON THE LABOUR MARKET. THE PROFESSION OPTION – A DECISION FOR CAREER AND FOR A LIFESTYLE

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*Knowing the importance of the integration process of graduates of higher economic studies on a labour market that is becoming more and more demanding, as well as the fact that professional objectives realistic defined represent an essential demand of performance, the present paper aims to determine the relevance of personal decision capacities as a favouring factor of a concrete career option for economist students.*

*Our research is based on information and statistical data obtained through applying tests and questionnaires on economist students from licence and master studies from three universities: University of Oradea, The West University of Timișoara and “Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, in the project called PRACTeam „The practice of economist students. Inter-regional partnership on the labour market between universities and the business environment” Project co-financed through the Social European Fund, Through the Operational Program Human Resource Development 2007 – 2013 – „Invest in people!”.*

*In essence we leave from the premises that the professional option reflects a specific side of individual's personality which does not choose only for a certain occupation but, implicitly for a certain lifestyle. As a diagnosis approach we assume axiomatic the thesis according to which the high level of congruence between the individual psychological availabilities and the occupational environment raises the satisfaction chance and professional success.*

*The approach that we submit is an interdisciplinary one, as well as the research team formed of two economists and a psychologist. Our study proposes to identify the correlation between the individual decision ability of the subject and the compatibility between a specific interests set of abilities identified on the basis of individual tests. Also, on the basis of processing the results obtained of economist students at the personality tests, we will try to argument explaining the option of some subjects for professions that demand individual qualities that their personality does not imply at the level asked.*

*Key words: labour market, profession option, economist students, career*

*JEL Codes: J01, A11, M50, A20*

## **The psychological perspective over young people's integration on labour market. Individual abilities, occupational environment and career decision**

The compatibility between profession and person has been theorised according to some classical models leaving from some common elements of observation, that consider the fact that people are different and work environments are diverse, that the individual option is guided on the basis of determination of a specific set of abilities and interests with the help of some psychometric tests. The model of „matching” between the person and the work environment has been extended by the authors such Rodger (1952), in England or Holland (1959, 1973, 1985) in USA, who observed that between the occupation of a person's and profession there are often differences that reflect equally a personal option and also the general state of the art of the society and especially

a certain economic conjuncture. The application of those models takes to the conclusion that it is normal that between the profession (qualification) that a person acquires through study and the occupation of that person exists a consistent continuity.

On the labour market, once ending the training, graduates of diverse educational cycles are confronted with the need of exploring the workplace offer. Generally speaking, the choice of a profession is made on the basis of some descriptions of the teaching system components and of the organizing ways. After the accumulate preparation and certificates students make personal career scenarios.

In order to acquire a best insertion of work force on the labour market the graduates and the holders of professional certificates must inform as exactly as possible regarding the occupational alternatives. Usually the occupational information allows individuals to affine the occupational alternatives congruent to the interests, values and abilities proved during the studies. Also, occupational information allows familiarisation to the labour market, the evaluation and identification of negative and positive aspects in order to mend the perceptions of stereotypes about certain occupations. In essence, the information about certain occupation refers to: educational requirements, needed competences and tasks, the nature and environment of the work place, work schedule, the wage standard, the statute offered, lifestyle imposed, promoting opportunities, diverse aspects regarding the professional ethics and respectively the current demand on the labour market (Lemeni & Negru, 2008).

Theoretically, we can consider the career decision as “the process that leads to the selection of a career alternative from the amount of choices available at a certain moment” (Lemeni, 2008). The literature in the field distinguishes three components that interact in the career decision: decision content, the decisional process and the context of the decision.

We can identify a series of individual differences regarding the way one chooses a career. Evaluating the alternatives we observe different decisional styles. There have been identified, on theoretical level, several classifications of the decisional styles. Therefore, we admit that we might have at least the following possibilities:

- rational style (logical and organised approach of decision on the basis of some sprung plans);
- dependent style (the choice is done leaving from advice and directions from closest people);
- avoiding style characterised through postponing;
- intuitive style based on impressions and moment impulses;
- spontaneous style (without deliberations, the decision is rather passionate).

It is obvious the fact that for decisions with long term implications, such as the career decisions, the rational style is the fair solution.

### **Methodological aspects. The analysis of individual capacities and career decisions of economist students**

Baring in mind what we have shown earlier, our study tries to clarify the proportion that is born between the context of decision and its content. Regarding the context of the career decision, we look for explanations considering internal and external factors that influence the complex decisional process.

*Internal factors* represent the conditions that facilitate individual option for a certain educational and occupational trajectory. In our study, internal factors have been quantified on the base of *measuring the self knowledge of subjects* (interests, values, habits and personality characteristics), *the evaluation of decisional abilities* especially the capacity of correlating self knowledge with the professional and occupational offer. Also, the decisional abilities have been qualified through reporting to the individual's capacity to analyse alternatives, to take into account and the certainty of the individual that he disposes of consistent means to choose the most appropriate option for himself or herself.

Regarding *the extern context*, we used as a theoretical modelling element a situation reflected by elements that have been identified on the labour market at the present moment. The structure of

opportunities has been modelled into the perspective of jobs in economic field that the labour market offers to students and graduates of economic studies.

As a research method we used questionnaire, applied to a number of 189 students and graduates of economics, participating in the PRACTeam project.

Our study aimed to measure for the tested subjects *the decisional capacity indicator* using a Likert scale from very weak to very good. In order to identify the items there have been used the following instruments:

- decisional ability test (evaluates the rationality of the decision maker, consists of 14 items that describe decisional situations and present alternatives for which the subjects choose, the items being formed as possible choice situations);
- Interest evaluation questionnaire (IEQ) (evaluates the preference of a person for a certain activity or area of knowledge, it is formed of 60 items, grouped in six correspondent scales, to the six groups of interests from Holland's theory: realistic, investigative, artistic, entrepreneurial and conventional).

The hypothesis that we need to statistically validate is that individuals with a high decisional capacity (good, very good), correlate significantly with the set of specific interests and aptitudes determined on the basis of individual tests and personal option for a professional track in economic or other field. In a first phase, the results obtained at the IEQ (objective measure of individual capacities), in terms of a combination of three characters according to the Holland's classification code, has been confronted with the manifested, clear, asserted professional option as a choice of one of the economic specializations: International businesses; The economy of commerce, tourism and services; Finances and banks; Accountancy and stock control informatics; Management and Marketing (to be seen *Table nr. 1 The distribution of subjects according to the preferences for certain economic fields*).

**Table nr. 1. The distribution of subjects according to the preferences for certain economic fields**

Specialization	The first result on types of jobs according to Holland classification						Total
	Entrepreneurial	Conventional	Social	Realistic	Investigative	Artistic	
International businesses	8	9	11	0	0	0	28
The economy of commerce, tourism and services	9	7	15	1	1	1	34
Accountancy and stock control informatics	2	22	5	1	0	0	30
Finances and banks	4	18	7	0	2	3	34
Management	14	7	5	1	1	0	28
Marketing	10	10	10	1	1	3	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>189</b>

As it is shown in Table nr.1, the distribution of subjects is kept in the expectance horizon created on the basis of common perception over the competencies that are offered to graduates through the specialisations chosen. Students who have chosen International business are grouped in the area of social (11), entrepreneurial (8) and conventional (9) posts. They are aware of the fact that the specializations that they have chosen implies intense interpersonal relationships and communicating with people (descriptors of social post) managerial and organizing abilities, the

capacity to make decisions and assume risks (descriptors for the entrepreneurial post). The polarization in the area of conventional post might seem a paradox in this context, but their orientation towards success implies a realistic passing from working with ideas towards practical manipulation of some concrete data and details from an organised frame.

Management specialization has the options concentrated according to the expectancies in the area of entrepreneurial posts (14) while students in the Accountancy and stock control informatics as well as Finances and banks chose in majority (22 out of 30, respectively 18 out of 34) for conventional posts. Their preference for rigorous checking routines and their bent for organized work through procedures reflects a specific coherence between the subjective set of expectancies regarding own career and the nature of tasks that they are going to effectively fulfil.

Overall, we conclude that the distribution of the subjects confirms the existence of a common mentality *pattern*. We expect intellectual dynamism, advanced communication skills and good negotiation skills from an International businesses specialist. Accountancy implies rigour and inclination towards routine, availability to procedural acting and fulfilment of routine tasks. The specialization Economy of commerce, tourism and services takes the weight centre of preferences in the direction of social posts, where the accent falls on communication with people, helping people and providing services to them.

**Table nr.2. Correspondence between the level of decisional capacity and the choices in favour of some professions associated to the field**

Specialization	Total respondents/ specialization	Scores at the decisional capacity GOOD and VERY GOOD	Holland codes/ professions associated to the field <sup>5</sup>
International businesses	28	10	ACR
The economy of commerce, tourism and services	34	24	ACS
Accountancy and stock control informatics	30	19	CIA
Finances and banks	33	16	ASC
Management	27	7	ISC
Marketing	35	17	AIC

As we can see in Table nr.2 and Table nr.3 regarding the distribution of decisional capacity on specializations, the most relevant correlation between the decisional capacity, personal qualities and the specialization chosen appears in subjects enrolled at specialization Economy of commerce, tourism and services. Also, relevant figures appear for the specializations Accountancy and stock control informatics (19 out of 30 subjects proves good decisional abilities), Finances and banks (16 out of 33) and Marketing (17 out of 35). The students, who follow specializations in fields with a clearly defined occupational area, prove better decisional abilities, they choose following well defined objectives and their expectancies regarding their own career prove to be more realistic.

The low scores obtained in the case of specializations International businesses and Management, explain through the relative attractiveness of the areas with new opportunities of self development. The two fields are suitable to occupational areas much more diverse, fact that creates the general impression of large opportunity. In fact, on a real labour force, these specializations do not have a large opening. The possibility to employ economists in the field of

<sup>5</sup> Holland Codes/professions associated to the field: ACR – entrepreneurial, conventional, realist; ACS – entrepreneurial, conventional, social; CIA –conventional, investigative, entrepreneurial ; ASC – entrepreneurial, social, conventional; ISC –investigative, social, conventional; AIC –entrepreneurial, investigative, conventional.

International businesses is in expansion, but the field still remains an exclusivist one and the chance to employ comes from an equation with quite many variables. The lowest score (7 out of 27) register students enrolled in Management, which is quite surprising. These scores can be attributed, in our opinion, to the obscure significance of management term at the level of common sense and in the context of managerial deficit that regional economy is confronted with. The candidates apply to these specializations on the basis of some choices determined by extern factors (parent's wish, diverse preconceptions regarding what they think "a manager is") and under the pressure of a subjective "mythology" tagged of many preconceptions.

**Table nr.3. Data regarding the decisional capacity distribution according to the specializations**

Specialization	Decisional capacity					Total
	Very weak	Weak	Medium	Good	Very good	
International businesses	4	5	13	5	1	28
The economy of commerce, tourism and services	3	6	19	4	2	34
Accountancy and stock control informatics	3	6	18	2	1	30
Finances and banks	8	7	15	4	0	34
Management	2	8	12	5	1	28
Marketing	5	8	13	7	2	35
<b>Total</b>	25	40	90	27	7	189

The statistical processing of results validates the hypothesis analysed. We can identify a significant correlation of high scores obtained by subjects at the decisional capacity test, and a relative correspondence on the area of correlations between the personal set of interests (determined on testing with the interests questionnaire - IEQ) respectively the option for a specialization or another. In a concrete way, students who have obtained high scores at the decisional capacity test (to be seen *Table nr.3. regarding the distribution of scores obtained at the decisional capacity tests according to specialisations*) are enrolled in specializations that imply interests and aptitudes in consonance with profession descriptors associated to the license that they are going to obtain.

## Conclusions

As a conclusion, the difficulties encountered in the decisional process of subjects seem to be determined firstly by a series of irrational beliefs (myths) regarding the choice of a career and especially of the inconsistency of information about themselves or about opportunities. Obtaining some clear information and not contradictory about themselves can be partially realised with the help of specialists in human resources.

As the data processing reveals, a significant part of subjects obviously operate influenced by contextual pressures derived on one side from elements that regard economic realities (labour market offers important opportunities to fructify education in entrepreneurial field), as well as influenced by a common set of preconceptions. It persists the idea that economic studies offer an easy enclosure on the labour market and, often, individual option is determined by advices and incentives of some persons with presumptive authority (parents or close friends). Between those, dominates the preconceptions according to which occupation that they will have after graduating

from university will be in direct relation to the license obtained at graduation. But on the real market of workforce, the transition proved by the power of evidence that several diplomas does not automatically mean more competence. The tendency to value exclusively and in a narrow field academic education is a not adjusting belief: we must admit and take decisions remembering the fact that the relation between educational programmes and workforce market is not clearly and univocal determined in all fields.

Entrepreneurial occupations, as it results from our data are marked by a relative difference of phase between the university specialization chosen by the subject and the type of occupational interests that resulted after testing. These discrepancies, associated with a low decisional capacity take to choices influenced by conjuncture. The subject chooses the specialization ignoring the personal set of qualities and real interests as he is confronted with a severe need to maximise chances to occupy quickly a place on the an extremely restrictive labour market. The identification of a groove, the opportunism and the failure fear (specific data of an unfavourable economic context) determine the subjects to primary take into account external factors. The global economic crisis and post-transition effects that manifest on the Romanian labour market are arguments that allow interposing conjuncture options in the horizon of normality. Even more, the dynamics of workforce demand represent an important signal for higher economic education regarding the large dispersal of the fundamental field Economic Sciences in too many specializations, in our opinion, at level of BA programs in the conditions in which general economic education and interdisciplinary education seem to be more appropriate formulas in the context of the labour market dynamism.

The current paper presents the preliminary research results in a field that we discover and consider as being fascinating and of real importance and actuality. Our future approaches will be headed to define a set of proposals of measures, strategies, politics destined to higher economic education in order to facilitate the integration of young graduate economists on the workforce market and monitoring the entrepreneurial professional track of economist graduates.

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