

INITIAL TRAINING. MASTER COMPONENT

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Abstract

This paper presents some considerations on the initial training component of the learning process, which contributes to the complete and complex development of the individual and, at the same time, to the sustainable development of society. Training Master offers up-to-date and high quality training, nationally accredited, according to the needs of students and the society, deliver professional development courses in critical thinking skills, motivation, conflict management, work life balance and leadership skills. Our flexible training programme is suitable for groups and individuals. Of all stages through which the individual passes during his professional training, in this paper we address Master's degree studies.

Keywords: *initial training, school education, higher education, postgraduate education, bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctorate, motivation for further study, questionnaire administration.*

JEL classification: I21

1. Introduction

An individual's initial training is achieved through the learning process.

The first meaning, which is the current one, is that professional training is the activity done by an individual prior to employment, in order to gain general and specialised knowledge needed to exercise a profession or job. ... In a broader sense, professional training may also mean the improvement of this training that is acquiring new knowledge [3, p. 289].

It results from the definition that training is a strategic objective of the national education system.

National Education Law No. 1/2011 stipulates that “the education and training of children, young people and adults have as a primary purpose the acquiring of competences, viewed as a set of multifunctional and transferable knowledge, skills/abilities and aptitudes required” also for “employment and participation in the functioning and development of a sustainable economy” [Art.4, c].

Under the Labour Code, the main objectives of the training are [Art.192]:

- obtaining a professional qualification;
- the employee's adjustment to the job or workplace requirements;
- updating knowledge and skills specific to the job or workplace and improving professional training for the main occupation;
- retraining due to socio - economic restructuring;
- the acquiring of advanced knowledge, modern methods and procedures necessary for performing the professional activities;

- preventing the risk of unemployment;
- promoting and career development.

Training has two main components:

- initial training;
- ongoing training

2. Considerations regarding initial training¹

Initial training is conducted through training programs included in compulsory education and through programs followed by graduates immediately after its completion; these programs ensure the acquisition of professional qualifications.

The main objective of professional training is the forming of competences.

Competence is a multifunctional and transferable set of knowledge, skills/abilities and aptitudes acquired for:

- personal fulfilment and development, by achieving one's goals in life, according to the interests and aspirations of each and willingness to learn throughout life;
- social inclusion and active participation in society;
- employment and participation in the functioning and development of a lasting economy;
- forming a conception of life based on humanistic and scientific values, on the values of national and universal culture;
- educating for dignity, tolerance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- raising awareness of human issues, civic and moral values, and promoting respect for natural, economic and socio-cultural environment.

Initial training takes place in schools through:

- vocational education,
- secondary education,
- post-secondary education,

and:

- higher education, which provides initial training at the highest levels of qualification.

School education ensures key skills and progressive professional development. It is organized into levels as follows:

- Upper secondary education - secondary school education lasts from 4 to 5 years (grades/classes IX - XII/XIII) and provides specialised education to young people from 15 to 18 years; registration to the ninth grade is open only to lower secondary school graduates - holders of national test certificates; senior year graduates take the baccalaureate exam and after passing it they receive their Diplomas; education forms are full-time, evening school, part-time and distance-learning.
- Upper secondary education – vocational education lasts from 6 months to 2 years and is available to young people from 15 to 18 years; education forms are full-time, evening school, part-time; registration to the first year is open to lower secondary school graduates with or without a national test certificate; education is offered within the following educational units: vocational schools (arts and crafts), apprentice education, special vocational schools, special rehabilitation schools.

¹ To see PUIU, T. Career and Lifelong Learning, *Revues Economy Transdisciplinarity Cognition*, 2013, 1 (16), 31-37. ISSN 2067 – 5046.

- Post-secondary education – is not equivalent to the first university level; registration to the first year is open only to upper secondary education (high school) graduates, with or without a baccalaureate Diploma; education forms are full-time, evening school, part-time and distance-learning; education is offered within the following educational units: post-secondary schools, foremen schools, special post-secondary schools.

School education is organized for specializations and qualifications established by the Ministry of Education in conformity with the National Register of Qualifications.

Higher education is organized within universities, academies, research institutes, higher education schools and similar institutions.

Higher education institutions can be public, private or religious. They are corporate bodies, non-profit, apolitical and of public interest institutions.

The mission of higher education is to generate and transfer knowledge to society through: [Art.117 of Law no. 1/2011]

- a) university-level initial and ongoing training aiming at personal development, individual employability and complying with competence requirements of the socio - economic environment;
- b) scientific research development, innovation and technology transfer, individual and collective creativity in science, engineering, arts, letters, sports performance and physical development, and also the valorization and dissemination of results.

Higher education currently is structured in three cycles:

- Bachelor's degree;
- Master's degree;
- PhD studies.

Higher education is organized based on the following educational forms: full-time, part-time and open-distance learning; admission requirements for each of these cycles are graduation from the previous cycle confirmed by a "Diploma".

The qualifications acquired by graduates of higher education study programs are confirmed by diplomas, certificates and other documents issued only by accredited higher education institutions [Law No. 1/2011, Art. 120].

Post-graduate education includes:

- advanced research postdoctoral programs;
- post-graduate training and continuing professional development programs.

- Advanced research postdoctoral programs are open to people who took their PhD degree not more than five years before admission to the postdoctoral program and who wish to follow education at a different institution than the one which has awarded the PhD degree; these programs provide the institutional framework for advanced research after completing doctoral studies. Postdoctoral programs are at least one year-long and may be organized either at doctoral schools of higher education institutions or at other research and development units.

Upon completion of postdoctoral program, IOSUD or host institution issues a certificate of postdoctoral studies.

- Post-graduate training and professional development programs can be organized by higher education institutions having at least their Bachelor's degree programs accredited in the particular academic field.

Graduates having at least the university degree or its equivalent are entitled to attend postgraduate studies.

Upon completion of postgraduate training and professional development programs, the organising institution issues a certificate of professional competence relevant to the program.

3. Theoretical considerations on the Master’s degree university studies

It was stated previously that according to the Bologna Process higher education consists of three cycles: Bachelor’s, Master’s and PhD studies.

Table 1 presents a summary of progressive increase in learning outcomes in the three academic cycles as defined by Bologna Process.

Table 1: Learning outcomes within university studies

Descriptor	Bachelor’s degree	Master’s degree	PhD studies
Level of knowledge and understanding	Knowledge is based on understanding and ability to convey knowledge from textbooks reflecting the current level of scientific knowledge in the field.	Knowledge is based on advanced textbooks, articles and recent studies allowing formulating original ideas aiming at the development and / or application of knowledge gained.	Advanced and systematic understanding of the field of study and of specific research methodology thus providing prerequisites for advanced scientific knowledge and development of new applications.
Skills to apply and use the acquired knowledge	Ability to develop and support arguments for various hypotheses from textbooks.	Ability to creatively solve problems emerging from new contexts, usually through integration of interdisciplinary knowledge.	Ability to develop, adapt and implement original research, whose results extend the frontiers of knowledge and whose original solutions are recognized by national and international citations.
Ability to develop analysis and make conclusions	Ability to collect relevant information and interpret data.	Ability to combine and integrate different information from complex contexts and to formulate assumptions under circumstances of incomplete information.	Ability to develop critical analyses, evaluations, conclusions and syntheses in order to produce judgments and new ideas.
Ability to communicate and work in a team	Ability to circulate information, ideas, problems and solutions.	Ability to present own conclusions and judgments to specialist and/or non-specialist audience.	Ability to comprehensively communicate results of own investigations in dialogue with other individuals with or without specialized training.
Willingness to learn	By entering further training programs.	Motivation for individual study.	Ability to pursue an advanced research career in an academic or professional environment.
Autonomy and willingness	Responsibility in resource management.	Leadership and creativity within work-related environments.	Leadership, innovation, involvement in team’s strategic performance.

Source: [1].

Master’s degree study programs represent the second cycle of university studies, completed in compliance with level 7 of EQF/CEC and with the National Qualifications Framework. These programs usually last from 1 to 2 years and require a minimum number of transferable study credits, between 60 and 120. The Diploma or Bachelor’s degree of higher education graduates

prior to the implementation of the three Bologna cycles was equivalent to the Master's degree in the relevant field [Law No. 1 /2011, art.153] .

In compliance with the national legislation, the following types of Master's degree studies can be organized in Romania:

- professional master, oriented mainly to acquiring professional skills;
- research master, focused mainly on acquiring scientific research skills;
- teaching master, organized primarily for those who work in education.

The law allows higher education institutions to establish partnerships with businesses, professional associations, etc., aiming at the development of Master's degree study programs meeting labour market requirements at certain periods of socio-economic development.

Master graduates, after successfully defending their dissertation, are awarded Master's degree containing all the information describing the curriculum and which is accompanied by the diploma supplement, which are mandatorily issued both in Romanian and in an international language.

Master's degree Diploma certifies holders' skills and is an asset when entering the labour market.

4. Practical considerations regarding further Master studies

In order to analyse the perception of Master studies in Bacau I conducted a study at "George Bacovia" University.

"George Bacovia" University of Bacau was established in 1992 as an alternative to public higher education. It is currently accredited for Bachelor's and Master's degree studies.

The study aims to analyse the motivation to continue higher education at Master's level.

Data collection was performed through a questionnaire responded by undergraduate master students specialising in: Management of Public Administration Institutions, Business Management and Management Marketing. The total number of people questioned for this study was 72, all senior year students.

The conducted research is largely a survey because the target group is not entirely representative of the university master cycle. However, I believe the results are relevant because they have enabled the feedback on how students perceive the master studies.

The questions aimed the following aspects:

- knowing the respondents (age, gender, employment status, etc.);
- revealing the motivation behind continuing higher education at Master cycle as well as its importance for success in life.

Processing of questionnaire responses

The first module of questions aimed highlighting respondents' main features.

The analysis of respondents' main characteristics has revealed the following:

- in terms of the gender feature the group has a very balanced structure (32 female and 40 male respondents);
- the age structure of respondents indicates a dominant share of young people (over 79% are under 30 and only 12.5% are over 35 years), a normal structure for a higher education institution;

- 75% of questionnaire respondents already have jobs, thus confirming the situation of Romanian contemporary society, where, in order to be able to continue studies many young people need to work in order to have financial support; also, working during studies helps meeting the experience criterion of many employers when recruiting labour resources. Only about 48% of employees carry out an activity relevant to their Bachelor's specialization, showing a relative difference between the majors followed and labour market requirements;
- over 90% of questioned Master students have urban residence, the situation generally corresponding to job offer situation.

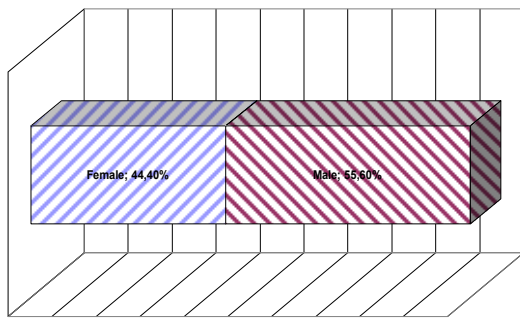


Figure 1: Structure of respondents by gender

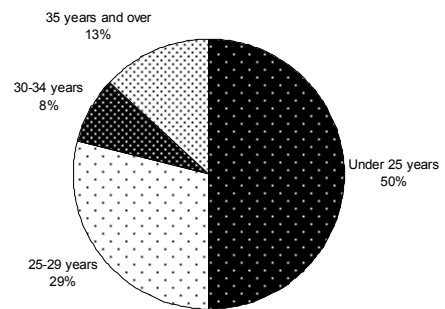


Figure 2: Structure of respondents by age

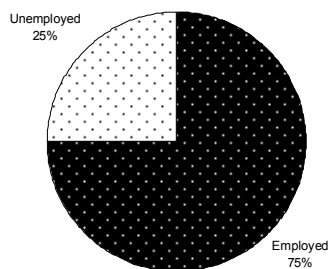


Figure 3: Structure of respondents by labour market situation

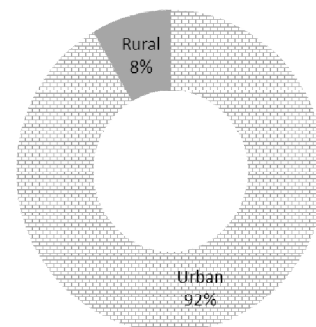


Figure 4: Structure of respondents by place of residence

The age of respondents (50% under 25 years) leads us to the conclusion that most of them chose to pursue graduate studies immediately after graduation and Bachelor's degree exam.

The students addressed in the sample come from families with a high level of education (60% post-secondary and university education), families which focus on educating young people as they are aware of the role of education and training in achieving a successful career.

The questionnaire also included questions relevant to the motivation to continue higher education through the second cycle of education.

The results of processed answers to these questions are given below.

Regarding the reasons for continuing graduate studies at Master cycle, the responses revealed the following range:

- 34% - for professional fulfilment,
- 32% - for a better positioned job within the organization,
- 19% - for better pay,
- 15% - to be recognised and respected in society.

Having been asked to rate their level of motivation for Master studies on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 the lowest rate and 10 the highest rate), about 75% indicated 8 (32%), 9 and 10 (21.5% each), evidencing a very high level of motivation.

With regard to the meaning of success in life, which could mean: successful career, social prestige, starting a family, money, relationships, the students were asked to indicate two possible answers. 63% of the respondents indicated “a successful career” coupled with “starting a family”.

Response options to the question “To what extent is a successful career important in life?” indicated the role and importance that students attach to professional achievement. Thus, 94% of the respondents considered a successful career of high and very high importance.

Regarding background influence on success in life, 68% of the respondents placed family first, followed by university, with 25.5%. Other options (friends and colleagues) were considered very important by an insignificant number of respondents.

When asked “Do you consider that attending Master courses helps increase the chances for success in life?” the students gave the following responses:

- 11% - heavily,
- 55% - largely,
- 28% - in an appropriate manner,
- 6% - to a small extent.

There were no respondents who considered attending the second cycle of higher education unnecessary.

5. Conclusions

Vocational training is a complex process that takes place at two levels:

- initial training, which runs throughout schools from the national education system;
- ongoing training, taking place during professional activity.

Within initial training, university training holds an important place and is done at three levels: bachelor, master and doctorate.

Master’s degree studies represent the second cycle of university education and in compliance with level 7 of EQF/ CEC and the National Qualifications Framework.

In order to highlight the perception of Master studies and the motivation behind them, I designed a questionnaire administered to a sample of Master students from “George Bacovia” University of Bacau (although the sample cannot be considered representative of the entire number of master students, nevertheless the information gathered offers a potential vision on this cycle of university studies).

Processing questionnaire data led to several conclusions, namely:

- currently, mainly young people apply for Master studies usually after taking their Bachelor's degree exam;
- young people from families with a high degree of education, having urban residence, are more interested in continuation of their university studies;
- young people make the connection between education and success in life; in fact, apart from starting a family, they believe that success in life is also determined by a successful career; the same conclusion results from the responses regarding the background that determines success in life, where respondents placed family first, closely followed by university (education).

The final conclusion on Master courses is that attending it an individual greatly contributes to increasing the chances of success in life.

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