

CAREER MANAGEMENT - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS REGARDING THE PERSPECTIVES OF GRADUATES ON THE LABOR MARKET BEFORE AND AFTER THE PANDEMIC CRISIS

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Abstract: *Career management has always been an important subject in the field of human resources management. Companies who had invested in and supported their employees or potential candidates in regards to personal career development, in accordance with their abilities, obtained visible results. As claimed by the majority of theories (Maslow, Herzberg, McClelland, McGregor) investment in personnel and offering the chance for career development leads to long term benefits. The pandemic crisis debuting in year 2020 has prompted the appearance of many changes in the labor market with regards to graduates' perspectives and the way in which companies have chosen to rethink their personnel strategy. The present study analyses career perspective differences, available for graduates before the pandemic crisis debut and the present situation on the labor market.*

Key words: *career management, labor market, motivations theories, pandemic crisis*

JEL codes: M12, M54, J54

Introduction

The labour market has been in continuous movement for the last two decades, especially in 2008-2020, between the two major economic crises. The employers' requirements have diversified; therefore the students' curricular training has continuously diversified as competences, according to the specific needs of each domain. The human resources management became a field harder to predict, because the companies have tried to progress in all aspects of their activity, imposing to the human resources a permanent adaptability and capitalisation of competences, according to the labour market. The present article refers to a research developed before pandemics in a public university in Romania. We repeated the same study in October-November 2020, during the second wave of Covid 19 pandemics. The results are relevant for a partial diagnosis of the labour market and for the perception of the transition toward the statute of employee. The career planning and management must include a strategy appropriate for obtaining a job, especially one in accordance with the academic training. The initial career placement is very important in the determination of the economists' career (Oyer, 2006).

Literature review

Numerous studies discuss aspects related to career, labour market, employability, access possibilities, and abilities necessary for specific professions and fields, as well as the students'

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and graduates' perception of the career perspectives. (Sahlin& Engwall, 2002), (T. Tóth-Téglás et al., 2016) The evolution of the labour market depends on the way the companies will recruit, train, develop and preserve the young talents (Lin, Y. R. et al., 2011). Nowadays, the graduates' unemployment rate is alarming, especially due to the absence of a relevant support from the business environment and to the lack of expected abilities among the graduates (Okoli, 2017). It is necessary to identify the specific elements that need to be developed during the academic training, in order to improve the quality of the insertion of the graduates' in Economics on the labour market (Negruşa, 2006). It is necessary for the students in Economics to develop practical abilities of innovation and entrepreneurship (Xu, R., & Li, M.,2018). Each industry in subject of global competition, so the nature of the contact of employment, at the level of each party's rights and obligation, suffered major changes (Dragolea, 2017).

Both the employees and the employers have their own intrinsic or extrinsic motivations. Each of them desire innovations, but the variable of the intrinsic motivation is larger for the employers, while the extrinsic motivation is for them not much impacted by external factors (Türkeş, M. C et.al., 2020). The EU Strategy 2020, "Agenda for new skills and jobs" aims to increase the correspondence between the supply and the demand on the labour market. The academic institutions make efforts to rapidly identify the demand on the labour market and to train the students according to this demand (Ádler, J., Stocker, M., 2012).

To properly and correctly train the students, our study research the students' perception, as beneficiaries of educational services. Their opinions were investigated before and during the Covid 19 pandemics, in order to identify the changes in the graduates' mentality, approach and action for the accession on the labour market. (Păunescu et. al, 2015). The direction of the organisations toward an economy based on knowledge does not require the engagement in new types of competition advantage as human resource, but it can represent a fundamental change in the nature and formulation of the strategies (Leovaridis, 2013).

The object of research

The necessity of the study is connected to the observation and presentation of the reality on the Romanian labour market: an important number of graduates in Economics have problems to find a job corresponding to their academic training, many of them practicing a job outside the field of their specialisation, sometimes on the black labour market or outside the native country. The present researched performed before (2016) and during (2020) the Covid 19 pandemics aims to analyse the students'/graduates' opinions on the possibilities to access the labour market.

The sample population

To study the possibilities available on the labour market for the students/graduates of Economics, we designed and applied a research instrument consisting of a questionnaire, aiming to test the opinion of the students/graduates on the possibility to access the labour market after graduating in the field of Economics. We collected a number of 91 valid answers in 2016 (from a total of 178 graduates of "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, Class of 2005, economic specialisations), and respectively 120 valid answers (from a total of 188 graduates of "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, Class of 2020, economic specialisations). As mentioned, the research instrument is the questionnaire.

Research results

We present as follows the items and the results.

Question: "Do you intend to find a job?"

Answers 2016 : The majority of the questioned students/graduates positively responded to this question (92%), proving their desire for a better life and the readiness to find a job.

Answers 2020 : The majority of the questioned students/graduates positively responded to this question (97%).

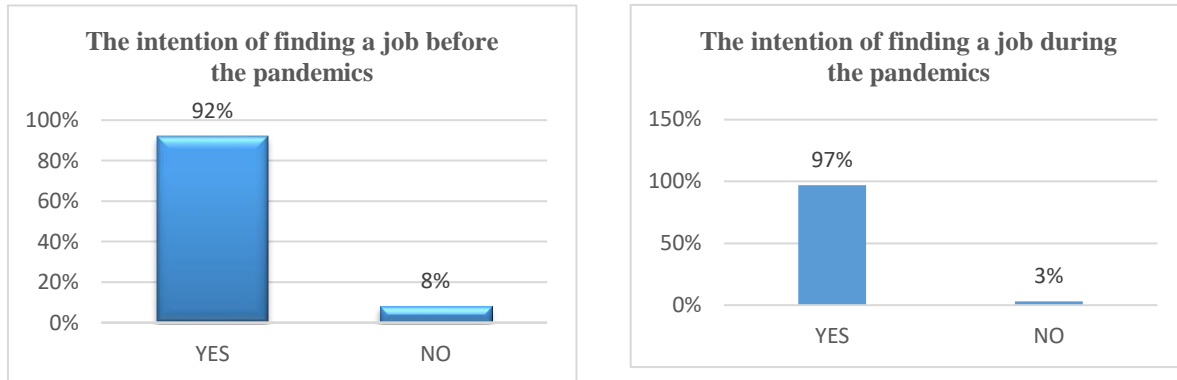


Fig no1. The ratio between the students/graduates willing/ not willing to find a job
Source: authors' data processing

Question: "How many times did you apply for a job using a CV?"

Answers 2016 : The question aims to identify how many students/graduates have and use a CV to apply for a job. The answers show that more half of the students/graduates (55.4%) used a CV to apply for job.

Answers 2020 : The percentage of students/ graduates applying for a job using a CV substantially increased to 78%.

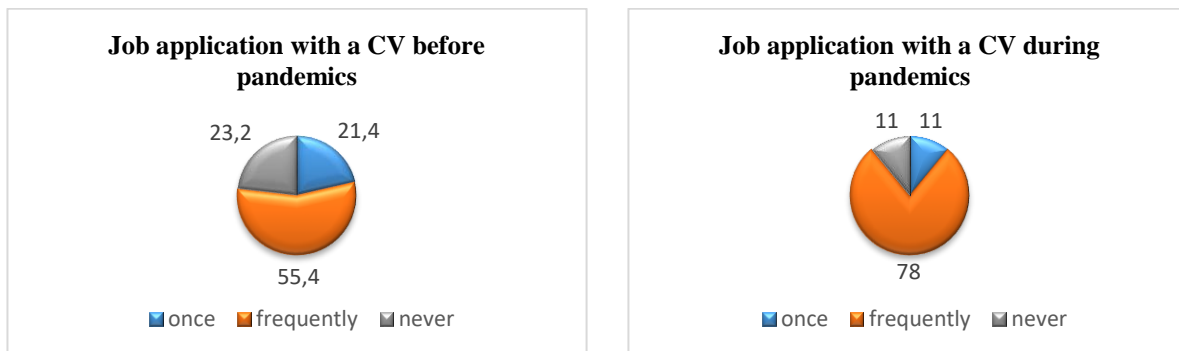


Fig no2. The situation of students/graduates using a CV to apply for a job
Source: authors' data processing

Question : "How many times did you have a job interview?"

Answers 2016 : The frequency of graduates' job interviews is high. Only 23.2% never participated to a job interview, the majority participated to 1-3 job interviews (51.8%), 16.1% participated to 3-6 job interviews, and 8.9% participated to 6-10 job interviews.

Answers 2020 : The frequency of interviews changes: 51% participated to 3-6 job interviews, percentage in 2016.

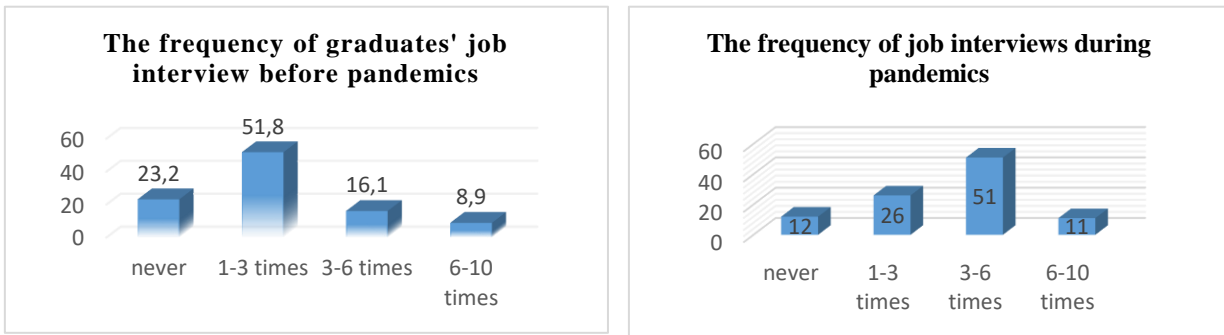


Fig no3. The ratio of graduates participating to job interviews
Source: authors' data processing

Question : "Have you tried to find a job outside the field of economics?"

Answers 2016: The responses show that the graduates found more rapid a job outside the field of economics (69.1%). Only 30.9% preferred to wait longer to work in the field of their specialisation.

Answers 2020: The pandemics lead to a higher number of graduates intending to work in other domains in case they do not find a job in the field of specialisation.

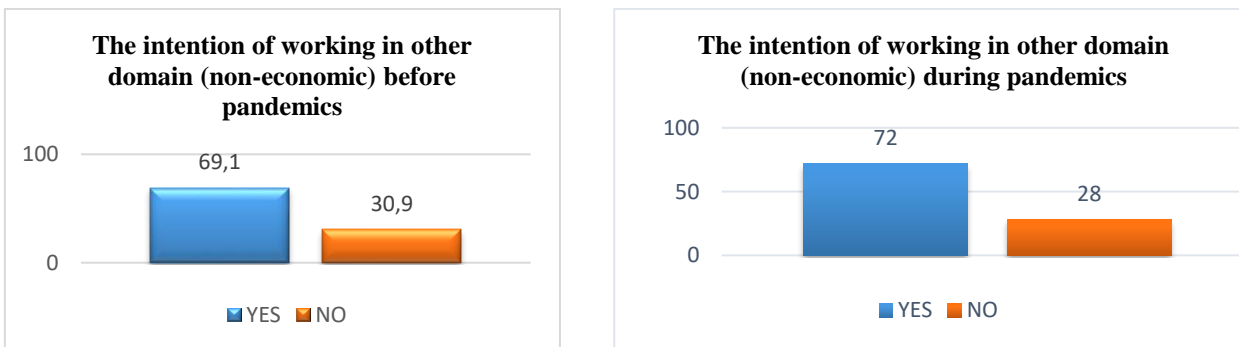


Fig no 4. The intention of working in another domain outside the field of economics
Source: authors' data processing

Question : "Do you consider that the companies are interested in graduates' employment?"

Answers 2016: The Romanian companies involve in the training of the students in Economics, offering several job opportunities. Therefore, 24.5% graduates gave an affirmative answer, 22.4% a negative answer, and 14.3% had no knowledge of such companies.

Answers 2020: The majority consider that the companies are not interested in graduates' employment.

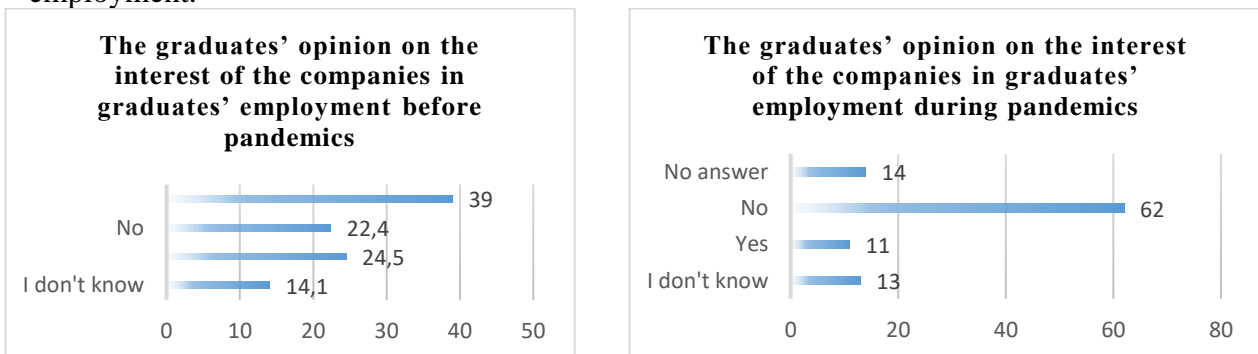


Fig no 5. The graduates' opinion on the interest of the companies in graduates' employment
Source: authors' data processing

Question : “Which of the following methods have you used to search for a job?”

Answers 2016: The evaluation of the responses placed the search on the internet on the first place as method to search for a job (73,5%), because it was the most comfortable, efficient and accessible environment for all students/ graduates. Other methods used in 2016 were: recommendations coming from the social circle (57.1%), magazines and newspaper advertisements (44.9%), job fairs (32.7%) and job exchange programmes (16.3%).

Answers 2020: The methods for the identification of jobs have changed, but the internet search remains on the first place, through dedicated sites, online job fairs, and webpages of the companies.

Question: : “Have you tried to find a job in another locality or country?”

Answers 2016: The answers show that 52.7% did not try and do not intend to find a job in another locality or country, while 47,3% have tried and intend to relocate for a job.

Answers 2020: The pandemics impacted the willingness to relocate. The willingness to relocate in another locality decreased from 52.7% in 2016 to 21% in 2020. The explanation is that the students/ graduates choose to live with the parents in this period of uncertainty and to save the expenses instead of finding a job in a large city.

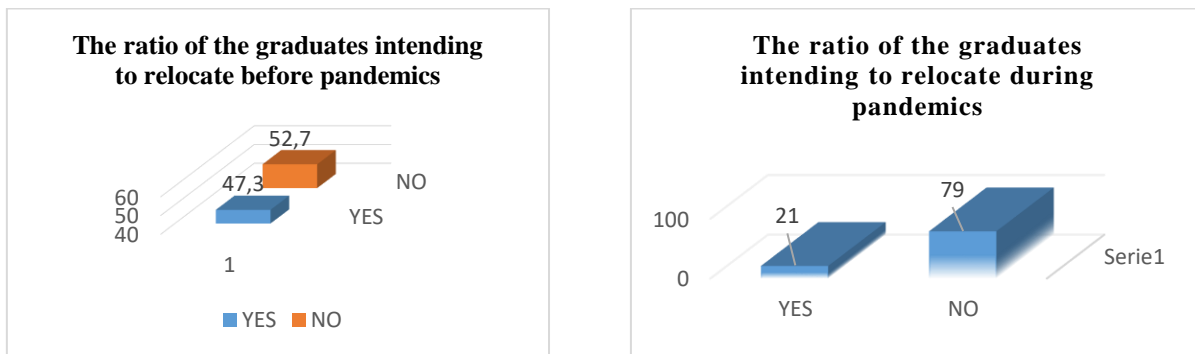


Fig no 6. The ratio of graduates intending to relocate a
Source: authors' data processing

Question : "Are you willing to requalify in a different sector if you will not manage to find a job in the field of economy?"

Answers 2016: The results related to the willingness to requalify in a field different of economics show that 77.6% are willing to find another job in another field, only 4.1% are willing to requalify, and 18.4% are undecided.

Answers 2020: The trend of requalification is maintained in 2020 from the perspective of the possibilities offered by the online schooling, without the obligation to relocate during the schooling period.

Question : "Do you consider that the state could also use other means to increase the number of graduates employees?"

Answers 2016 : Until that point, the government modified the laws on the graduates' employment, with no visible effect on the graduates' unemployment, which continued to grow. 89.8% respondents considered that the government could also adopt other means to fight the unemployment, while 10,2% considered that the state did not have the means to increase the graduates' employment.

Answers 2020 : Unlike companies, which consider that the state does not support them with specific measures, the graduates consider that the state, including the University, supports them and offer viable career alternatives and options.

Analysis of results

Analysing the responses from the second stages of the research, before pandemics and pandemics, we can draw relevant conclusions: at the present time, the students/ graduates intend to find a job shortly after graduation, using the means offered by universities for the insertion on the labour market. The majority of the respondents are prepared for job interviews and the number of participants to job interview is in continuous growth. The most recent graduates are in search for a job even outside their field of academic studies.

Related to interest of the companies in graduates'/ students' employment, the Romanian companies are interested to hire in specific conditions.

The responses related to the modalities used to search for a job show that the Internet is, at the present time, the most used modality, followed by the social circle and the job fairs.

Unlike the previous period, when students/ graduates were opened to relocation, the pandemics changed the options, therefore, the majority of respondents, based on economic reasons, want to live in the proximity of the family, at least until obtaining certitude and stability as income and job.

Related to the students'/ graduates' perception on the support of the university to find a job, the majority of the respondents declared in both investigation periods that they were supported by the university to access the labour market through facilitation measures. Related to the support from the Romanian state, the graduates consider that the measures in 2020 are good, in comparison with the measures in 2016, when the involvement of the state was perceived as weak and insufficient.

Conclusions

The Romanian universities offer to the graduates the chances to easier integrate on the labour market in the field of economy. The existent European projects for the support of young graduates and the practice offered by Romanian companies give the chance to the students to have a part job, which will change in a full-time job after the graduation.

Although the unemployment rate for students/ graduates have considerably increased in the last years and the unemployment is a global issue – with an unemployment rate depending on country, region, period, age segment, and qualification, a well-trained graduate is presented with multiple opportunities to access the labour market. The students/ graduates involved in volunteering as students, in practice and internships have advantages in finding a full-time job.

Almost all Romanian universities have developed in the last years partnerships with local and zonal companies and are able to offer, through the Centres for information, counselling and career orientation, useful information on the dynamics of the labour market, employability, and trending specialisations.

The exchange stages and the specialisation stages are very useful and generate visible results for any interested student. The exchange stages are necessary to obtain a minimum experience, often required to a job interview.

Many companies offer practice for students and give them the possibility to directly interact with the specificity of working in economy, the logistics, the informational system, and all the other systems in a company. At the present time, the main source of jobs for the graduates is the private sector. The old pattern of academic institutions was designed to offer especially theoretical specialists (Frunzaru& Leovaridis, 2016), but the situation totally changed at the present time. The uncertainty brought by the pandemics led to a behavioural change for the career access. The graduating classes of 2020 were the first generation giving the final exams online. This period intertwined with the necessity to find jobs, which is an aspect negatively perceived by the majority of the respondents. The measures taken by the university together

with the companies are destined to support the graduates in the stage of real and unexpected changes and begin to show their good results.

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