THE MAJOR INFLUENCE OF THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

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Abstract

We can notice that a new economic system took shape in the last years, a new economy based on knowledge, research and innovation leading to a smart and sustainable consumption behaviour of the population, as a result of the technological progress. In the new economic paradigm, the determinant factor is the human factor and the creativity of the human capital is the main raw material. In order to exploit the human mind, it is compulsory to educate and train it; shaping talents and skills. These tasks belong to the educational system, the trainer of the future labour force. This paper aims to make a comparison between Romania and other successful European countries regarding education and employment. Concerning the education, this paper will take into consideration the early leavers from education and the tertiary educational attainment, showing how their situation has evolved during 2004–2014; regarding employment, there will be shown the situation and evolution of the employment of recent graduates for the same period of analysis. These aspects were chosen to be analysed in order to demonstrate the vast economic development potential of Romania by investing in human resources by paying a greater attention to the educational system and preparing future labour force suitable for the demands of the current and future labour market, so increasing the quality of the labour force, adjusting it to the current labour needs and becoming more effective in terms of social and economic development.

Key words: creative economy, human resources, labour, education, employment

Classification JEL: E24, I25, J21, J24, O31

1. Introduction

The concept of the creative industries was defined for the first time by the Great Britain’s Government’s 2001 Creative Industries Mapping Document, referring to them as to “those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through generation and exploitation of intellectual property” [13].

Information, technology and human resources are nowadays recognised as the most valuable assets, this high importance being given by the unlimited potential of value creation. This unlimited potential is based on creativity, i.e. the process of generating new ideas and therefore new products and services. Even if creativity was always related to the quality of the human capital, in this new economic trend, it could appear as a distinct production factor in those fields where creation power is compulsory. Therefore, the creative economy comes out as the new way of presenting the current economic reality, where information, knowledge and original creations – products of individual labour – are the driving forces of the economic development, with its own specific features, advantages and also limits.

According to Richard Florida, “the creative economy is drawing the spheres of innovation (technological creativity), business (economic creativity), and culture (artistic and cultural creativity) into one another, in more intimate and more powerful combination than ever” [3]. He describes the creative economy rather in terms of occupation, referring to those employed in this sector, i.e. the creative class [11]. The creative class includes persons highly creative, acting differently in many situations than those less creative, “they can easily think of ways of solving a difficult situation and tend to see difficulties as interesting challenges” [14], they see rather opportunities than threats.

Consequently, the creative economy appears as a distinct economic sector, due to the nature of the activities performed by the creative class. All these activities, artistic or intellectual, frame the creative industries. One of the typologies used in the literature, emphasizing the diverse and complex nature of the creative industries is achieved by Bobircă et al. [2]:
Creative industries with artistic content (sculpture, theatre);
Creative industries with cultural content (festivals, local arts);
Creative industries producing media: traditional (hardcover books) and digital (ebooks);
Creative industries producing intangible assets (design, research);
Related industries (hardware producers, IT and communication industries with role of supporting the creative industries, etc.)

All these creative industries involve artistic or intellectual activities, defined by certain characteristics (fig. no.1).

Openness to different kind of people, diversity and social inclusion represent the basic conditions for the creative economy and as Florida pointed out, for the economic development, technology, talent, tolerance and territory, the 4T, are “the most important factors, alongside with time and exchanges”[9].

The concept of the 4T involves all those characteristics of the creative economy which are determinant for the economic development, under the aspects of:

- **T** – Technology: it is expressed by the number of patents and technology clusters concentration;
- **T** – Talent: it is revealed by the share of the population with higher education, artists or other people whose work is related to intellectual capital;
- **T** – Tolerance: it relates to disclosing populations’ openness towards persons belonging to other races, ethnicities or having other sexual orientation etc.;
- **T** – Territory: recently added to the old concept of the 3T, it is analysed through the quality of a place, amenities offered by a given environment or city.

2. The importance of the human capital

The classic economic system was exploiting natural resources and workers’ physical capacity for labour, having the main disadvantage of consuming limited resources. In any field of activity, "better recipes", as more effective techniques of production, bring a competitive advantage and the new economic paradigm, where the creativity of the human capital represents the new competitive advantage, determines a shift of direction towards a knowledge-based society. Noticeable in the past, possessing sources of raw materials or having geographically access to the sea brought incomparable economic advantages for certain countries, regions or cities; currently, possessing a pool of skilled labour force represents the ultimate competitive advantage, determinant in decisions - making of the important investors.

Under the present economic conditions, the economic development needs the materialisation of those ideas representing efficient solutions for the consumption of the existing resources. In the current conditions, a company’s physical assets or influence are no longer its most valuable possessions, their past importance is being given to the
human resources; this importance comes from their limitless potential to generate revenues and so, economic growth and development.

The human resources appear as the fuel of nowadays economy, but not as direct working force; the advent of machinery and equipment had brought significant benefits for all activities, but the high level of automation also brought the workers’ replacement, which led to a rise in the level of unemployment. Workers were replaced with machines more and more efficient, which are actually the creations of the human imagination, the engine of the technological progress being creativity itself. Therefore, the most valuable contribution that a person could have in a technological process is his or her intellect and creativity, the importance of the human resource being represented by the intellectual capital.

Given the large number of workers replaced with high performance machines, flexibility and adaptability, and also the acquisition of new skills prove to be compulsory and long-term guarantees for the human resources aiming job stability in the actual labour market.

3. The creative class – the human resource of the creative class

In the present economic conditions, exploiting a resource with no material limits, such as the human mind, represents a new way towards social and economic development. This essential resource is represented by the creativity of the human mind, as the prime production factor of the creative economy.

Nowadays, creativity represents the engine of the new economic trend, based on technology, talent, tolerance and, more recently, territory [1], and those who are operating in the creative sector “provide the seeds of innovation from which germinate economic growth” [5]. The creative class is paid for making intellectual effort, and using cognitive and interpersonal skills in their work, unlike workers in other sectors of the economy, carrying out routine tasks.

Florida compares social classes along time as the economy has evolved, pointing that, as in the past times aristocracy had been recognised by the inherited identity and control power over lands and peasants, and the bourgeoisie as merchants and factory owners, so the creative class defines its identity as creativity and intellectual supplier [3], emphasising its current dominant presence in the economy.

The creative class distinguishes itself not only by the nature of the created products but also by the way of creating them and the time allocated for labour. The core of the creative class is represented by scientists, engineers, architects, designers, artists, teachers and entertainers, and their economic function is to create new ideas and new technologies; beside the core, there can be found professional activities such as finance, law, health care and related fields [8].

The common features of the creative class are given by the necessity of acting by “their own judgement and having a high level of professional training” [6], privileging values such as creativity, individuality, difference and merit [12]; achieving goals involves their own work and intense efforts such as permanent education and training, specialisation and mental discipline.

The personal values and attitudes of the members dictate the identity of the creative class, pointed out by openness towards self-expression, power and willingness to work, self-affirmation and public recognition of their talent.

4. T from Talent – education and training of the human capital. Some facts and figures

In Florida’s concept of the 4T, the second T, the talent™ or human capital, stands alongside technology as a primary driver of economic growth™ [4]. Taking into consideration the economic development through the creative sector, talent – as a main factor, is determined by education attainment, qualifications and skills of the human resources.

As previously mentioned, this issue regards scientific or artistic activities, both of them requiring a high level of training and education. Analysing the creative economy through the activities conducted by the creative class, we assume that a country thriving by the creative sector, is a country which records high levels of education and professional training: An artist should practice his talent for a long period of time in order to become successful; as it is generally known that the more a person practices, the more his/her skill will be improved. The same effort, as training and practicing, is made by a scientist or another person operating as a specialist in his/her field of activity. Therefore, the level of education is the most relevant factor for the creative industries, the intellectual capital is their raw material and a qualitative raw material in this sector has to be educated, trained, its skills shaped, something impossible to be accomplished if the educational system is left early.

We are analysing in the following part several issues regarding the level of education in ten European countries. As it could be seen in Table no.1, we are first investigating the early leavers of the educational system, i.e. aged 18-24 having graduated at most lower secondary education.
Table no. 1. Early leavers from education (% of the population aged 18-24 with, at most, lower secondary education), 2004-2014

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Source: EUROSTAT, accessed on 10.10.2015

As revealed by data (see Table no. 1), during 2004-2014, the general trend was favourable, recording a decline in the number of education’s early leavers, Norway being an exception. Over time, the highest values were recorded by Bulgaria, Romania and Italy, while the lowest in 2014, by Ireland (6.9%), Netherlands (8.7%), France (9%). Paying attention to these evolutions, we note that Romania reports the highest rates of leaving education, being surpassed sometimes only by Italy. Comparing Romania with some of its neighbours, e.g., Bulgaria and Hungary (see Figure no. 2), we can notice that for the entire period of time Romania had the leading position in the ranking, meanwhile Hungary maintained its already lower level. As revealed by Figure no. 2, Bulgaria registered the best developments, as it has succeeded to reduce the level of education early leavers with 40% since 2004. Although Romania has also succeeded to lower the level of early leavers from the educational system, the changes were not significant.

![Fig. no. 2. Early leavers from education (%) in selected countries, 2004-2014](source: EUROSTAT, accessed on 10.10.2015)

On the other hand, concerning the human capital and its potential to generate economic growth and development, Romania’s limits can be revealed not only by figuring out the low rates of education attainment but also by measuring the rates of higher education graduates. Therefore, we represent in the next table some relevant data regarding the tertiary education, which is the source of the population that will be employed as qualified labour force and considered as the intellectual capital operating in the creative industry.

Table no. 2. Tertiary educational attainment (% of the population aged 30-34), 2004-2014

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Source: EUROSTAT, accessed on 10.10.2015
The data provided show us the ascending trend in attending higher education. The best performing countries regarding the early leaving of education and have recorded the highest rates in tertiary education attainment in 2014 were: Ireland 52.2%, Norway 52.1%, The United Kingdom 47.7% and Netherlands 44.8%. In contrast with the situation of the early leavers from education where the lowest rates were recorded, Ireland has the leading position in the rank for each year of the analysed period, which is showing that Ireland has an important resource for the creative economy, as human capital.

Regarding Romania, the country recorded the most impressive performance over the last ten years, by doubling the values of the higher education attainment. However, in comparison with Ireland, Romania has a much more unfavourable situation, Romania’s level is less than half of Ireland’s level. It is necessary to consider Ireland’s surface and population, because these high rates in tertiary education attainment and low rates in early leaving school are more easily to record where population is not so numerous. According to UNESCO [18], in 2013 Ireland had a population of more than 4 million people and Romania’s population was about 21 million [20].

When comparing Romania with Bulgaria and Hungary, as previously done, we can note that both Bulgaria and Hungary perform much better regarding tertiary education attainment, but also these two countries have a much lower population than Romania, i.e. Bulgaria recording in 2013 a population of more than 7 million people [21] and Hungary almost 10 million [22]. Noticeable is the fact that the higher the population of a country, the lower the percentage of the population with higher education.

![Fig. no. 3. Tertiary educational attainment (%) in selected countries, 2004-2014](image)

5. The importance of choosing the right career path

This paper aims to highlight the importance of constantly adjusting the education to the labour market’s demands, demands which are strongly influenced by the technological progress; so graduating tertiary education is not a general guarantee of social and economic development of a country; it doesn’t mean the graduate will be employed in the creative sector or will even get any other job. The paper aims to show the essentiality of being part of the creative class, pursuing what we can name “your personal calling”, taking into consideration personal inclinations, aspirations and talents for labour market insertion. Often, people choose to pursue a certain career based on expected or desired successes and potential income, as well. In many cases this is leading to failure, due to situations of never getting a job in that field of activity, getting no professional satisfactions or finding out the unsuitability of that profession and dropping out after a while. The creative economy generates important revenues [7] through activities conducted firstly from passion and just secondly by pecuniary reasons, as it is already recognised "money only keep the score. The best people operating in any field are motivated by passion" [10].

In the following table we will present the evolution of the employment rates of recent graduates, in the period 2004-2014. The levels of employment of the recent graduates are considerable high for all the countries, over 50%, and for the entire period of analysis. Although in general, the recorded values didn’t fluctuated drastically, in all the analysed countries, except Germany, there was a negative evolution in the employment rates of the recent graduates, Germany being the only country that recorded growth. We should consider that a higher level of tertiary education attainment is leading to a higher unemployment rate of recent graduates, representing a social negative aspect,
therefore a very large number of graduates in a certain field leads to a saturation of the specific labour market.

Table no. 3. Employment rates of recent graduates (%), 2004-2014

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Source: EUROSTAT, accessed on 15.11.2015

Considering Romania, the same could be told. As Romania’s level of graduates increased, the number of persons who couldn’t find a job in their professional field increased. Romania’s level does not differ too much from those of Bulgaria and Hungary, and this is a very favourable aspect, considering that Romania’s population is much larger. The decreasing rates of recent graduates’ employment could be explained by the willingness of pursuing a career considered successful in the moment of enrolment because of those already operating in that field of activity; therefore a very large number of graduates in a certain field leads to a saturation of the specific labour market.

[Fig. no. 4. Employment rates of recent graduates (%) in selected countries, 2004-2014]

Source: EUROSTAT, accessed on 15.11.2015

6. Conclusions

The new economic trend represented by the creative economy appeared as a result of the population needs’ evolution; the more developed a country is, the more superior needs the population has, and therefore the larger creative sector a country has, the more economically developed that country is.

Developing the human capital, the technological progress is spreading and accentuated by creating new products and new processes of production or by improving the existing ones. Creativity is associated with a mind that exhibits a variety of knowledge and interests and its development is favoured by an intellect enriched with experiences and diverse perspectives. As the economic trend is changing, the educational system should change, by providing competences and professional training adjusted to the current needs of the labour market.

As it is shown by the several aspects analysed in this paper this paper, Romania has an important development potential in comparison with other European countries, yet latent and undervalued, because of the lower rates of the higher education attainment, and the high rates of the early leavers from education. As we have argued, in order to develop the creative sector in a certain country, its labour force needs high specialisation; regarding the two educational aspects analysed, the early leavers from education and the tertiary educational attainment, Romania has a lot to improve. As it could be seen in Table no. 2, the low rate of tertiary education attainment is a problem for Romania, but regarding the employment rates of the recent graduates represented by...
Table no. 3, there could be observed a positive aspect for Romania due to its high rates, similar to those of the more performant countries, such as Ireland.

The general negative trend registered by the employment of the recent graduates reveals a problem in the labour market, i.e. its saturation in some fields of activity. This issue requires further attention especially from people choosing a certain career, but also from the educational system and training providers.

Concerning Romania, the low rates of qualified labour force represents an existing potential which could be exploited more efficiently in order to increase Romania’s economic performances.

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