

Perceptions regarding the Hard and Soft Competencies necessary to access the Romanian Labor Market

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Abstract

The main aim of our research is to analyse the perceptions of the future economists (students and MBA students) in comparison with those of the employers, regarding the hard and soft competencies required in order to access the labor market. To do that, we've elaborated an empirical study based on a transversal descriptive research, the chosen method being a statistical survey. We concluded that the employers and students who own a job underlined that soft competencies are more important than hard competencies. The students without jobs give priorities to hard competencies. To achieve work performances, students (future economists) have to possess strong soft skills, able to complete the knowledge acquired during the cycles of studies. To generate sustainable organizational success, the future professionals must combine harmoniously the hard skills with the soft one.

Keywords: hard skills; soft skills; employers; Pearson's chi-squared test; students/MBA students.

Introduction

Business globalization, internalization of business relationships, development of capital market, generated in the last years changes in the labour market. Because of that, a lot of questions are arising frequently, regarding the employer's requirements when selecting new staff. Such requirements are: professional and transversal competencies, the applicant's professional experience, the continuous training courses run by the candidate, the results obtained during graduation and at graduation, the performance/carriage/attitude of the applicant during the interview, the previous experience, references from third parties, internships in the country and abroad, workshops, volunteering, work and travel programs during the university studies, the reputation of the institutions in which the candidate was trained, recognized achievements in the employer's area of interest (like awards), and so on. An important role is played - in the process of selecting young graduates with high economic education - by the professional and transversal competencies.

The concept "competencies" was defined first in the 1960s, as a result of the contribution of the American psychologist McClelland. He defined this notion as a summ of knowledge, skills and aptitudes, which contributes to the capacity of a person to effectively perform the duties and responsibilities of the occupied job, in other words, to be competent (McClelland, 1973).

The competence determines the performance of an employee in order to effectively perform the tasks, and influences its effectiveness at work.

The International Education Standards for Professional Accountants (IES3) prescribes the mix of professional skills that aspiring accountants should have regarding the education and practical experience level. Such skills are: technical and functional skills, intellectual skills, interpersonal and communication skills, organizational and management skills.

Order nr. 4476/2016 of the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research in Romania defines skills as being a proven ability to select, combine and use appropriate knowledge and other acquisitions like values and attitudes, to solve successfully a certain category of work or learning situations, as well as for professional or personal development, in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. This definition stated that the structural elements of the competencies are: the

professional roles, the performance standards, the context, the knowledge, the skills and personality characteristics, the attitude. These structural elements are aimed not only in building in-service training programs, but also in their implementation and evaluation.

From the point of view of the typology of the specific competencies, these include professional and transversal skills. Professional competencies represent a unitary and dynamic set of knowledge and skills circumscribed to a profession or a bundle of related professions. The knowledge is expressed by the following two descriptors of a bachelor degree student: a) understanding and use of a specific language; b) explaining and interpreting the knowledge.

Competencies or skills to use knowledge are expressed, in their turn, through the following three descriptors: a) application, transfer and problem solving; b) critical and constructive reflection; c) creativity and innovation (Năstase, 2012, pp. 18).

Each qualification is correlated with the graduated cycle (bachelor, MBA, PhD) and presupposes on the one hand general professional skills, and on the other hand, specific professional skills.

General professional skills are developed within the wider context of the field of study or of the fundamental field of knowledge. General professional skills may be common to several study programs provided for the development of different, but related qualifications.

Specific professional skills are developed within the narrow range of a particular study program (Năstase, 2012, pp. 18).

Transversal competencies (sometimes also called generic skills) represent value and attitude acquisitions that transcend the study program or the domains approached by the student and are expressed by the following three descriptors: a) autonomy and responsibility; b) social interaction; c) continuously personal and professional development (Năstase, 2012, pp. 19).

Hard skills are teachable skills which can be tangible and measured with tests, exams and interviews. Soft skills are psychological and emotional competences enabling a person to deal effectively with challenges in personal and professional life (Shethna, 2016).

In order to obtain a job in the economic field, young graduates need to make sure they possess soft skills which come to complete the hard skills acquired during the university studies. Soft skills take into account the attitude of the candidate, but also the way in which the soft skills may convince the employer to fill the position the candidate

applies. Soft skills must be proven by the candidate and not only mentioned in the CV or in the hiring interview.

Soft skills are included in the educational requirements, so teachers have to be more preoccupied to ensure the development of these competencies among the students. In order to be as competitive as possible in the current market of permanently changing workforce and also connected to the economic reality, students are increasingly aware of the importance they have to give to soft skills alongside the specialized knowledge acquired in the university.

It is not easy to fit all the soft skills into the traditional methods of learning and teaching. For example, developing the skills to communicate in a foreign language may be solved through conventional methods of teaching and learning, while developing an entrepreneurial and leadership spirit, or the ability to withstand stress can be stimulated and developed only by resorting to specific techniques.

In Tilea's opinion most frequently such technics impose a high level of creativity and innovation from the teacher or trainer and, also, the challenges are much more complex than in traditional teaching. Transversal skills require new ways of learning and teaching, which go beyond the conventional limits of school subjects, while decision-makers in education are extremely aware of this reality (Tilea, 2015, pp. 12).

The key competence - as the finality of the training process - has a well-defined presence in the National Education Law (Law no. 1/2011), representing a major target in the whole lifelong learning process. Vocational education and training of children, young people and adults, have as main purpose the formation of skills, understood as the multifunctional and transferable assembly of knowledge, skills and aptitudes, necessary for:

- a) personal fulfillment and development, by achieving the own life goals, according to each one's interests and aspirations, and to the desire to learn throughout the entire life;
- b) social integration and participation as active citizen in the society;
- c) implication in the functioning and development of a sustainable economy;
- d) setting a life concept based on humanistic and scientific values, on national and universal culture, and on stimulating intercultural dialogue;
- e) education in the spirit of dignity, tolerance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

f) cultivation of the sensitivity to human issues, to moral-civil values and respect for the natural, social and cultural environment (Law no.1/2011, art. no. 4).

Ardelean and Mândruț (2012, pp. 22) consider that from the definition and analysis of key competencies, results that: such competencies are defined through an abilities-attitudes knowledge system; they have an implicit transdisciplinary character and are the educational endings of compulsory education. Key competencies must be the basis of permanent education.

Literature review

In the Romanian and foreign literature there are a series of studies, debates, reflections on the issue: hard skills versus soft skills.

The exploratory study conducted by Cărbunăreanu (2015) try to present the employers' perception of the skills of MBA students which graduates the Public Administration program of the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences from Babeș Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca, Romania.

The study aimed to explore a number of issues, such as: the skills required for insertion into the labor market, the place where competencies are formed, as well as proposals to improve the way to measure the level of skills.

Employers interviewed in the study consider that the place of competence training is the place of work, but the institution in which the graduate was formed has an important role. In Cărbunăreanu's opinion, the institution in which the graduate was trained represents the place of accumulation of theoretical knowledge and provides the context for competence development. The main measures proposed by employers to improve graduates' skills are primarily aimed at: the importance given to the practical training of graduates by increasing the length of internships, focusing the disciplines from the university curriculum to the labor market requirements, inviting specialists from the economic environment to sustain useful practical presentations to students, the importance given to the linguistic skills of graduates, involvement of students/MBA students in research activities and collective working at national/international studies, articles, programs and projects.

According to a new research done by the leading specialist in jobs and recruitment, Robert Half (2015), leadership qualities and important communication skills, along with strong technical skills, are a

priority for candidates wishing to take up a position in the financial and accounting field, in order to provide added value for the firm. Other suggestion coming out from the study is the need of interpersonal skills and risk taking, to achieve success in the accounting and finance profession.

According to the research of accountancy recruiter Randstad Financial & Professional, 76% of the accounting firms included in the target group of the study is looking for candidates able to prove that they own strong soft skills. Managing director of Randstad Financial & Professional affirm that: „Managerial and leadership skills would be the most popular with big professional services firms”. However, the study found that among the soft skills sought by employers, excellent communication and listening skills are in the top of preferences. “Clearly, strategic leadership is important - a trait that the Big Four will look for in all of their A-players – it’s communication and listening that everyone needs to demonstrate at the moment” (Doherty, 2015).

Marc Zao-Sanders (2015) says that „In reality, tasks we carry out in a successful modern workplace require both, soft and hard skills”.

Tanaka and Sithole (2015) have conducted a study that established what kind of skills employers of accounting graduates expects and what skills the accounting graduates demonstrate. The target group consisted of 35 Swiss employers interested in hiring graduates of accounting programs. Employers came from diverse areas: production, services, public sector and NGOs. The results of the study indicated that computing techniques, written communication and reporting skills are highly demanded by employers. In contrast, employers perceive accounting graduates to be highly skilled in measurement skills, reporting skills and research skills. Even if employers have found that students of accounting programs are well trained in word-processing and knowledge of communications software competencies, they expect more accounting knowledge. The results of this study are useful not only for managers, but also for academic staff, in order to improve the content of the curriculum, to develop the hard and soft skills necessary for the graduates of accounting programs applying for a job in the current context of permanent transformations taking place on the labor market.

In the research of Cernușca et.all (2016), the CECCAR members concluded that in over 50% of the number of the accounting Alumni students interviewed, soft skills are more important than hard skills,

when talking about entering into the labor market in the field of accounting.

Han (2015) distinguishes careers that require more hard skills and less soft skills (e.g. physicists); careers requiring both, hard and soft skills (e.g. accountants, lawyers), as well as careers where soft skills are prior to hard skills (e.g. sales). For those who want to apply for a job in the economic field, both, hard and soft skills are required.

Doyle (2017) underlined that „While certain hard skills are necessary for any position, employers increasingly look for job applicants with particular soft skills. This is because, while it is easy for an employer to train a new employee in a particular hard skill (such as how to use a certain computer program), it is much more difficult to train an employee in a soft skill (such as patience).”

To have good hard skills usually takes smarts or IQ (also known as your left brain-the logical center). To have good soft skills usually takes Emotional Intelligence or EQ (also known as your right brain - the emotional center) (Han, 2015).

Hard skills are skills based on the same rules, regardless in which company or in what circumstances peoples use to work. The opposite are soft skills, with changing rules from one company to another, from a culture to another, from people to people (Han, 2015).

Hard skills can be learned in school and from books. There are usually designated level of competencies and a direct path as how to excel with each hard skill. Most soft skills are not taught well in school and must be learned at the job, through trials and errors. There are many books and guides on soft skills (Han, 2015).

Generally, formal education from all over the world focuses mainly on hard skills training. James Heckman, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2000, demonstrates in his research projects that „The level of development of soft skills directly influences the formation of cognitive skills and largely predicts good school performance”.

Moreover, Heckman pulls a great alarm signal: “The earlier we invest in training these skills, the greater benefits we will have, and the longer we defer this investment, the more we lose the benefits it can bring us” (Dagmar, 2014).

A great deal of emphasis was placed on integrating cross-curricular competences into the curriculum. European countries tend to combine several approaches to provide transversal skills: they can be

taught as self-contained disciplines, as part of a wider curriculum or a learning area, and can also be delivered throughout the curriculum where all teachers have the responsibility of teaching (eacea.ec.europa.eu, 2017).

Within the university environment, a number of projects that aimed to raise awareness among teachers, students and business environment have been developed, regarding the importance of developing hard and soft skills. So, within the POSDRU project: „Good practice guide of implementing the national higher education qualifications framework”, coordinated by Pavel Năstase, there are debated a series of issues related to the general/specific professional competencies and the transversal skills of bachelor, MBA and PhD students.

The Inter-Institutional Cooperation Project „New Tools for the Integration of Transversal Skills in Modern Teaching Practice (TRANSMOD)” coordinated by Monica Tilea, supports the need to develop a toolkit to integrate transversal competences in teaching. The final objective of the project was to publish a good practical guide, with new methods and devices for the student’s transversal skills.

Thus, the Good Practice Guide addresses a number of issues related to the development of professional competences through the project method, developing professional competences in the financial, marketing, management and entrepreneurship domains.

Methodology and Purpose of the study

The aim of our research is to study the perception of the employers in opposite to the students and MBA students perception from the Faculty of Economics, “Aurel Vlaicu” University of Arad, regarding the competences required in order to access the labor market. Starting from these concerns, an exploratory study based on a transversal type descriptive research was done; the research method used was the survey, the research tool being the questionnaire.

The questionnaire includes two categories of questions: general questions, their role being to provide a more accurate picture of the personal profile of the target group, as well as questions relating the perception of the target group regarding the competences required to access the labor market.

The questionnaire was distributed to a target group of 300 students and MBA students from “Aurel Vlaicu” University of Arad, Faculty of Economics, and to 200 employers working in Arad County.

From the 300 students and master students, 90 are employed full time or part-time, and 110 are not employed.

The questionnaire was distributed between October and November 2016. The basic aspects pursued within the scientific approach consist in formulating opinions regarding the importance given to hard skills vis-à-vis soft skills, in order to access the labor market by the economists.

The material proposes a dynamically research objective by testing two hypotheses broadly presented in the next paragraph. The objective of the research is to identify the views of the target groups regarding the importance given to hard skills, vis-à-vis soft skills.

Designing the research assumptions helps us in clarifying the issues that will be debated following the research; these assumptions may be accepted or denied by using calculations based on the statistical chi-squared test.

In this context, the following steps have been taken: formulating the statistical hypotheses, setting the significance threshold "alpha" and those of the degrees of freedom, definition of the square chi parameter, definition of the critical region, calculation of the observed parameter value and finally, the decision making process.

Results of the study

We intend to bring into attention the issues analysed in that paper, in order to achieve the proposed objectives. We envisage two target groups: Group 1, consisting of 300 students and MBA students, 90 of them being full-time or part-time employees, while 110 are not employed, Group 2 consisting of 200 employers. We divide Group 1 into two subgroups: Subgroup 1¹ consisting of 90 students and MBA students who are employed on a full or part-time basis and Subgroup 1² consisting of 210 students and MBA students who do not work.

Within the main objective of the paper, we aim to identify the perception of the two target groups regarding the importance given to hard skills in relation to soft skills, in order to access the labor market by young economists. To achieve this goal, we propose to test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis H_1 : There is a difference of perception between the two target groups

There is a difference of perception between the two target groups (subgroup 1¹, 1² and group 2) in terms of the importance given to hard and soft skills, regarding the young economist's access on the labor market.

The two target groups have to answer the following question: "Are hard skills a priority in hiring young economists?"

The predefined answers to the question were based on the Likert scale, using five variants of answers, from total disagreement to total agreement.

Zero Hypothesis H_0 : There is no difference of perception between the two target groups (subgroup 1¹, 1² and group 2) in terms of the importance given to hard or soft skills, regarding the access of young economists on the labor market.

In order to test the hypothesis we will appeal to Karl Pearson's chi-squared test.

Decision criteria's:

- The materiality: $\alpha = 0.05$
- The number of freedom degrees:

$$df = (\text{columns no.} - 1) \times (\text{rows no.} - 1) = (5-1) \times (2-1) = 4$$

Table no.1. Observed and theoretical frequencies (under group 1¹, under group 1² and group 2)

OBSERVED AND THEORETICAL	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total rows
Under group 1 ¹	6/5	36/30	9/12	26/30	13/13	90/90
Group 2	10/11	61/67	31/28	71/67	27/27	200/200
Total columns	16/16	97/97	40/40	97/97	40/40	290/290
The calculation of the parameter's observed value: $\text{Chi}^2_{\text{calculated}} = (6-5)^2/5 + (36-30)^2/30 + (9-12)^2/12 + (26-30)^2/30 + (13-13)^2/13 + (10-11)^2/11 + (61-67)^2/67 + (31-28)^2/28 + (71-67)^2/67 + (27-27)^2/27 = 3.47$						

Under group1 ²	17/1 4	38/5 0	27/30	73/7 4	55/42	210/210
Group 2	10/1 3	61/4 9	31/28	71/7 0	27/40	200/200
Total columns	27/2 7	99/9 9	58/58	144/ 144	82/82	410/410
The calculation of the parameter's observed value: $\text{Chi}^2_{\text{calculated}} = (17-14)^2/14+(38-50)^2/50+(27-30)^2/30+(73-74)^2/74+(55-42)^2/42+(10-13)^2/13+(61-49)^2/49+(31-28)^2/28++(71-70)^2/70+(27-40)^2/40=16.05$						

Source: authors own projection

Case a) the perception difference between undergroup 1¹ and group 2 regarding the importance given to hard and soft competencies in order to acces the labor market.

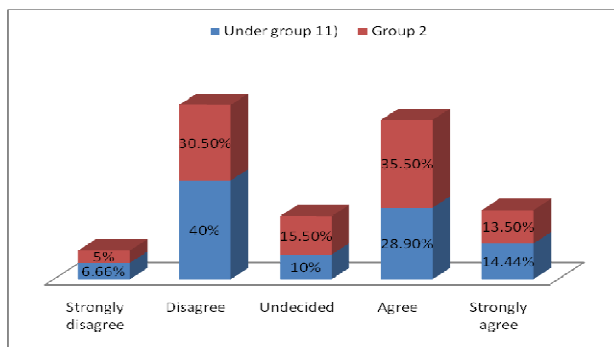
$$\text{Chi}^2_{\text{calculated}} = 3.47$$

$$\text{Chi}^2_{\text{critical}} = 9.488$$

The decision making:
 $\text{Chi}^2_{\text{calculated}} < \text{Chi}^2_{\text{critical}}$

Zero hypothesis is accepted, while the alternative hypothesis is rejected. They are not a perception difference between undergroup 1¹ and group 2 regarding the importance given to hard and soft competencies in order to acces the labor market.

Fig. no. 1. The opinion of groups 1¹ and 2 regarding the importance given to hard and soft competencies



Source: authors own projection

Less than 50% from the respondents belonging to group 1¹ consider that hard competencies are more important than the soft one, for the young economists (14.44% strongly agree and 28.90% disagree regarding the above mentioned opinion). 6.66% from the respondents strongly disagree, 40% disagree and 10% are undecided.

Around 50% from the respondents belonging to group 2 consider that hard competencies are more important than the soft one (13.5% strongly agree regarding the above mentioned question, while 35.50% agree). 5% from the respondents strongly disagree, while 30.5% disagree that hard competencies are more important than the soft one. 31 persons are undecided.

Case b) the perception difference between undergroup 1² and group 2 regarding the importance given to hard and soft competencies in order to access the labor market.

$$\text{Chi}^2_{\text{calculated}} = 16.05$$

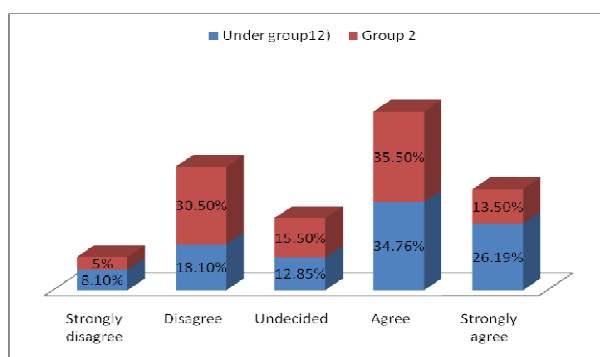
$$\text{Chi}^2_{\text{critical}} = 9.488$$

The decision making:

$$\text{Chi}^2_{\text{calculated}} > \text{Chi}^2_{\text{critical}}$$

Zero hypothesis is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. So, there is a perception difference between undergroup 1² and group 2 regarding the importance given to hard and soft competencies, in order to access the labor market.

Fig. no. 2. The opinion of groups 1² and 2 regarding the importance given to hard and soft competencies



Source: authors own projection

More than 50% of the respondents belonging to subgroup 1² believe that hard skills are more appropriate a priority than the soft ones, to allow the young graduate economists to access the labor market (26.19% are in total agreement with the question above mentioned, while 34.76% just agree, 8.10% of the respondents expresses total disagreement, 18.10% expresses disagreement, while 12.85% are undecided).

Almost 50% of the respondents belonging to group 2 consider hard skills to be a priority (13.5% are in total agreement with the question above mentioned, 35.50% just agree, 5% of the respondents expresses total disagreement, 30.5% expresses disagreement and 31 respondents are undecided).

If a candidate that applies for a position in the economic field have only hard skills, will make him or her to be interviewed, and even be selected for the job, while soft skills will help the candidate only to keep the job. Candidates applying for an economic job need to improve their hard skills through learning during the initial training (bachelor/master programs), and these can be developed through lifelong learning activities. Hard skills are easier to evaluate than soft skills, and they are confirmed through the diploma of studies, as well as other certificates that the candidates specifies when submitting their CV. While hard skills can be acquired during initial training, with soft skills we gain by birth. For some soft skills, there are no diplomas and certificates to prove them. They can be highlighted from issues such as: the attitude shown by the candidate applying for a job, behavior, communication, teamwork skills, decision making, its reactions, initiative and entrepreneurial spirit, openness to lifelong learning, outward appearance (clothing, gestures, etc). Individuals with these skills prove to be more effective at work and may have more chances to climb the professional hierarchy.

It is not enough just to mention the soft skills in the CV, but they must also be proven as being held by the candidate. People with poor soft skills can improve them.

There are various methods to improve the soft skills: lifelong learning courses, participation at volunteer actions, finding mentors and so on. For example, volunteering alongside the workteam in an NGO provides the opportunity to develop soft skills, like: developing entrepreneurial spirit, developing communication skills by supporting a

speech to a target group, interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds, etc.

An important role in the development and continuous improvement of the education system involves an efficient and harmonious initiate training and lifelong training. The concept of lifelong learning is essential in the context of knowledge society. The education and training strategy in Romania during the 2016-2020 period provided at point 31 that continuous training is divided in two dimensions: a) skill training programs, teaching, skills, specialization organized by the training providers authorized by law, workplace training organized by employers for their staff; b) skills assessment obtained by other means than the formal ones, by using evaluation centers for the competences acquired in other ways than the formal legally authorized ones.

Labor market occurred a series of changes in recent years due to globalization. In this context are raising questions concerning the requirements that employers are considering in the recruitment process. We find increasingly the mutations occurred in terms of the criteria that employers take into account in the selection process, meaning that the focus moves from candidates with strong hard kills and highly specialized, to candidates with high growth potential and able to adapt to new unforeseen situations. Cristina Popescu, manager of the recruitment company QPAS opines that „unfortunately, technical skills are learned more easily than the soft ones, so that if interpersonal skills are important for the part, the employer will lower the bar when it comes to technical skills in favor of «soft»” (Dobre, 2013). Given the current changes in the labor markets, analysing the personnel selection process, we find out that the required soft skills are increasingly high.

Mădălina Bălan, Managing Partner HART Consulting says that: „Much of managers are dissatisfied with the candidates, as they are unable to adapt to new situations and to express assertive. Therefore, companies prefer candidates without a rediscovered potential. The discussion moves, so as to identify this potential. The use of psychometric instruments during selection is one of the most tested and effective strategies in terms of costs to identify the most suitable candidates” (Dobre, 2013).

The "Labor Market 2017" report conducted by hipo.ro, highlights the Top 5 of soft skills appreciated by the employers, when selecting and recruiting staff. This are, in order: communication skills,

adaptability, focus on results, proactivity and troubleshooting (contabil.ro, 2017). Communication skills requires the candidate's ability to express themselves clearly, either verbally or in writing, either visually or nonverbal. Employers look for candidates who are able to voluntarily open communication channels, to ensure the work of a harmonious and constructive environment, thus contributing in building a team that can lead to efficiency and positive results for the company. To survive, grow and develop within the company, candidates must continually learn and adapt their knowledge acquired in the university, to the continuous needs and permanent changes occurring within the organization. The candidate must show pliability and diplomacy, and adapt its behavior to the organizational environment. In the company there are a number of problems and unforeseen situations which often require an urgent solution. Applicants should have skills to engage in work, assume permanent responsibilities, and strive to invest time to find solutions to solve the problems proposed in order to fulfill those tasks that are related objectives. Candidates who are oriented towards results are much appreciated by the working team and seniors, being considered main people in the organization. They set goals in a realistic, measurable and competitive way, looking for the fastest and effective way to solve problems and achieve planned results.

The teamwork are not responsible for the employee's success. Only the employee can achieve professional success and overcome unexpected problems that may occur. The way in which the employee is related to the problem is very important and it is important for the employee to be oriented in the direction of practical solutions, to determine the steps it has to follow to be perseverant in its actions needed to achieve a successful goal. The employee must be proactive and to have enough desire to create a favorable environment in order to achieve the objectives.

To ensure that the offer on the labour market will satisfy the needed soft and hard competencies, employers are becoming increasingly interested in getting involved in the training, developing and collaborative actions with the universities, by setting up programs and joint projects, organizing internships and round tables. In our globalized world, employers are not interested only in employing highly qualified graduates for work, but they must be willing to learn throughout life, to have good communication skills and teamwork, to

possess good digital skills, to be capable in negotiating, resistant to stress, manage their time effectively to meet deadlines etc.

It is needed a continuous improvement of the adaptability of prospective employees to the employers' needs, to combine the flexibility and compatibility of the knowledge acquired in courses and seminars with practical work requirements and future needs. The educational environment has made efforts in order to adapt the methods of teaching and learning to the soft skills requirements. Important roles have the strategies of teaching/learning based on the interactive learning methods.

The university curriculum should focus on the development of software competencies, in order to contribute to the employment prospectives of future graduates who intends to apply for a job in the economic field. We can take into account several approaches by which the university environment can contribute to the development of soft skills for students and MBA students. Soft skills can appear as self-standing disciplines in the university curriculum.

In order to develop the key competencies of students and MBA students, teachers must continually improve their knowledges.

National and international programs and projects come to support teachers in assimilating new modern methods and techniques of learning and teaching.

The activities that come to argue the efforts of the higher education institutions in order to acquire these soft skills by students and MBA students, and also by future economists, mainly refer to:

- running internships;
- organizing summer schools;
- organizing scientific Olympiads for students;
- organizing interactive activities within the students scientific circles;
- the opportunity offered to students and MBA students to participate in national and international programs and projects;
- flexibility and compatibility of the theoretical knowledge acquired through the requirements and needs of future practical work, as a result of the collaborations between universities and businesses, as well as between universities and professional bodies.

Conclusions

The case study shows that there is no perception difference between the interviewed respondents like employers, students, MBA students or economists who have a job, in terms of the importance given to hard and soft skills in accessing the labor market, by young economists. The respondents are aware that soft skills are a priority in integrating the economists in the labor market.

On the opposite side, the students and master students surveyed who do not have a job prioritize hard skills in penetrating the economic labor market.

To act as a creator, mediator, conservationist and sustainable value-supporter, professionals working in the economic field must harmoniously combine both, hard and soft skills. Without this, it is almost impossible to fulfill the roles and activities within the organization.

By harmoniously combining hard skills with soft skills, economists will be closer to clients, supporting and contributing to the development of sustainable organizational success, and that way, the economist profession will only gain.

The economic environment of the university has an important and high responsibility in terms of learning outcomes materialized in hard and soft skills, which together have a huge contribution in improving professional qualification.

The mission of the modern teacher is to develop educational strategies that highlight the importance and necessity of cultivating soft skills along with the specialized knowledge of the job, in order to access the labor market by the young graduates.

The universities mission, as an education provider, is to manage training, in order to prepare young graduates for a society that is constantly changing and opening up to new. Traditional learning must be combined with modern methods of teaching, learning, evaluation, and tools of the new digital technology. By doing this, university professors can contribute at the process of raising awareness among students and MBA students regarding the importance to own soft skills in the current context of human resource development within the organization.

The Romanian Strategy for Education and Continuing Vocational Training for the period 2016-2020 seek to continuously

adapt its education and training offers in line with the labor market requirements and the needs of direct beneficiaries.

The education and training system must continue to be focused on creativity and innovation, on the development of hard and soft skills that allow a personal development and the integration of graduates into the global labor market.

Limitations

The main limit of our research lies in the fact that the target group where only employers from Arad, as well as students and MBA students from a single university. In the future we intend to expand the target group to other employers in the country and abroad. At the same time, we aim to expand our research to students and master students from other faculties, to members of the academic environment, as well as to other users of economic information, in order to obtain additional data and to substantiate more relevant and reliable conclusions.

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