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Careers Guidance and Counselling in Hungary

The Hungarian historical antecedents of career choice guidance go back almost a century. The first professional publications appeared in the 1890s. An initiative was launched in 1921, as a result of which the first Careers Guidance and Counselling Institute was set up in Budapest in 1927. This fell into abeyance for almost half a century, during the period of the command economy of state socialism. The main reason for the interval was the existence of „full employment”, based on ideology. However, in the first half of the 1970s there began the development of institutions for counselling youth and also enterprises. This process was started in order to deal with certain emerging characteristics of the labour market. As a result, about 1000 people were engaged in counselling in the field of careers choice and employment by the 1980s. 600 of these counsellors were originally teachers who had been trained as career advisors, or worked as agents responsible for careers counselling.

During the period of the development of the market economy, and in the early 90s in particular, dramatic changes in the processes influencing the labour market, and the emergence of massive unemployment, pushed the issue of advisory work in careers guidance into the foreground. From 1991 onwards, careers choice counselling became a the task for labour centres; the latter became the new basic institutions for the organisation of the labour market.

During the past decade, institutions dealing with vocational training and the labour market have undergone fundamental changes. Legal regulations have developed significantly throughout the transition, and new contents for training – alongside new training organisations – have emerged. Nevertheless, it can be stated that SWOT analysis and investigations into systems for developing human resources have indicated clearly that careers choice is still one of the weak elements of the overall system. with respect to stable institutional safeguards, at present it is not easy to answer question concerning *who should be oriented, how, and in what direction?*

The major challenges are the following:

- the state is responsible for the young and should make efforts to safeguard access to training and jobs,
- it is a basic task of the institutional system of careers guidance to give realistic information about the labour market,
- the task of presenting a full range of actual possibilities for training should also be asserted in the school system,
- networks and the use of Internet offer new technical facilities for communication,
- continuous change should be allowed to evolve in a flexible way.

The Hungarian situation is more or less identical with the one which has emerged in all the Central East European (CEE) countries. It can be stated that the processes of transition are reaching their completion. In Hungary privatisation has been almost entirely completed and employment is also growing due to economic growth. Given these facts, it has become clear that access to training has become broad-based. Hungarian government policy also considers human resources as comprising a highly important factor. The essence of this policy is that it extends over education and training, and it should be given particular emphasis in secondary and higher education respectively; investing in human resources represents a specific new value, as the government strives to harmonise the interests of the economy with those of the society.

Characteristics of Hungarian careers guidance

- *Career choice in primary schools* is directly assisted by the form – masters, and agents responsible for careers guidance. Based on the respective activities of the former, parents and pupils are given advice on careers choice, professions, relevant training centres and “open days”. “Training exchanges” are organised and as much information as possible is provided. The counselling institutions and secondary schools annually summarise possibilities in further education in publications. These outline the particular types of job that can be considered given the possession of particular qualifications, as well as specific requirements according to subjects. Occasionally schools publish information on the Internet (on their home pages) which can influence the choice of a training institution for a particular career.
- *Activities promoting careers choice during secondary schooling* are basically limited to grammar schools. Occasionally help is offered in connection with career “correction” by pointing out alternative institutions of professional education and vocational technical training. These decisions are generally based on more concrete

considerations than those made in primary schools; this is primarily due to the greater “maturity” of the pupils. This work is assisted by specialist pedagogical services.

- The subject of “Careers guidance” (included in the National Basic Curriculum, and to be introduced in grades 7-10 of the public education system) has been a major step ahead in the *work of primary and secondary schools with respect to the promotion of careers choice*. This subject is part of the cultural area: “Lifestyle, Way of Life...”. This concerns the psychological components of successful career choice and the respective areas of skills related to the careers available on the labour market. In view of the act that, so far, the new curriculum has been introduced in only 40% of schools, the teaching skills for providing careers orientation are not yet in evidence everywhere. Measures have been taken to elaborate framework curricula and to introduce gradually new textbooks.
- Vocational training programmes for young people that have been in progress for a number of years with the support of World Bank also promote careers guidance activities in professional schools.

Hungarian involvement in the World Bank project (1998-2001) entitled “Development of Human Resources” has resulted in favourable changes in the training profile of schools. Furthermore, the number of marketable professions has increased, and the skills of teachers with respect to knowledge of the labour market have become stronger:

- According to the stipulations of Act on professional training (1993), the National Council of Professional Training (Hungarian abbreviation: OSZT) is to supervise annually the changes of employment opportunities facing career entrants with professional qualifications; furthermore, taking into consideration those experiences, the Council may recommend to schools that their structure of training be restructured accordingly. This exploratory, analytical and advisory work may greatly contribute to the elimination of unemployment among school leavers and actually enhance their chances of finding suitable employment.
- The activities of county labour centres and branch offices – which promote career orientation and the choice of a career of profession – have become more dynamic, particularly among the young. This is as a result of the promulgation of Government resolution (1995).
- The labour organisation offers special information to the young (on careers choice, the labour market, training extensions training, and employment). It also organises individual and group programmes, and carries out thematic counselling related to work, careers, job-seeking and rehabilitation. Its organisational framework is as follows: clubs for job seekers, specialist psychological services provided at county

level, and also services provided by Occupational Information and Counselling in the large cities. The efficiency of the activities done within these frameworks has so far not been subjects to a thorough investigation.

In the employment and careers counselling activities of the organisation of the labour market, there are special computer programmes. These promote career choice, career correction, and the development of self-knowledge ("Choices" is such a programme). These programmes have been successfully employed in combination with traditional procedures (e.g. with personal advice, psychological test, etc.). These methods are served by an objective-technical background which has evolved through targeted development, i.e. an FIT media library, which contains video films presenting careers, and information folders on the various occupation and professions.

With these services the labour organisation also supports training which assists directly in acquiring qualifications which correspond to the demands of the labour market and employment.

- With the financial support of the *Employment Fund*, professional careers choice for a were set up in Budapest and in the counties to promote and coordinate this activity. Representatives of schools, parents associations, pupils and employers (chambers) participate in their work. On the basic of the work they have carried out so far, it certainly appears that this organisational is a step ahead in the arrangement of tasks involving joint responsibility. Furthermore, it offers increased opportunities for more efficient activity, and makes much better use of benefits of the organisations involved.
- *Organisations of professional training which promote employment are:* schools offering vocational training, regional centres which develop and train the labour force, educational enterprises and non-profit organisations and institutions (including the ecclesiastic ones). These are becoming increasingly capable of presenting the skilled activities of careers orientation and correction. For participants in training which promotes employment – mostly the unemployed – there are programmes of professional careers orientation and catching up. There is also training for the labour market which is part of the professional training; this is supported by the respective part of the Labour Market Fund. Today these programmes are already taking place in practice in all training institutions, along with the vocational training programme.
- *Though the services offered in the labour market organisation* function continuously as parts of a system, employment and careers counselling is not guaranteed by every branch office. In dealing with clients it is a problem that the officers have relatively little time at their disposal. The technical background also needs development, basically

because FIT centres only exist in three counties at the moment date; at the same time the contents of the media library (films, folders), adapted with German help, require further extension.

- There are many organisations participating in careers choice activities (e.g. schools, organs of local government, specialist pedagogical services, interest representation associations of parents and pupils, labour organisations, regional centres for the development of labour and training, educational firms, training institutions, chambers of commerce, trade unions, various interest groups, non-profit organisations, and ecclesiastic institutions). However, *these organisations are not familiar with the underlying principles of the professional and methodological work* and the activities are often insufficiently coordinated; consequently their efficiency fails to meet current demands.
- Activities of career correction, carried out among the young and adults, should be performed in training institutions, in regional centres for the development of labour and training, in basic institutions at the respective county and regional levels (e.g. schools), and in institutions which have telecommunications facilities.
- In recent times insufficient attention has been paid to the *extension training programmes of employers and employees*. In such programmes the *special set of tasks of career correction and career building* should also appear when adults participate in professional training and retraining. (Elaboration of the tasks included in this field could be done in cooperation with the professional chambers and organisations of interest representation concerned, such as the National Association of Hungarian Employers and Industrialists).
- The knowledge, experience and skills to assist further education, career choice and correction, to transfer information thematically on the labour market and to implement modern counselling methods are *lacking among some of the experts guiding careers choice (e.g. careers choice agents, form teachers, advisors)*. This is certainly a professional problem. A positive change may ensue from the introduction of the postgraduate training of teachers and the operation of in-service training.

The main aim of careers choice and correction activities is that state (e.g. labour market organisations and schools) and other institutional activities should, in the future, be broader in content, more co-ordinated organisationally and thus more efficient; the developments should meet the expectations of the European Union.

Information about Hungarian conditions or careers choice and correction

1. Major data of institutions for careers choice:

- Number of pedagogical institutes in the counties and capital: 20
- Number of educational advisors: 132 personnel
- Number of advisors and specialist psychologists working in educational advisory services (together with the Municipal Careers Counselling Service): approximately 320-350 personnel

Source: Survey of the Municipal Careers Counselling Service, 1996.

2. Data about labour organisations:

- Number of branch offices: 178
- Number of service-providing experts working at the branch offices: 1,226 personnel
- Number of employment and careers advisors at branch offices: 119 personnel

3. Special services for labour organisations:

- Job-seekers' clubs (guided by a head of the club): 53
- Specialist psychological services (in counties and the capital): 20
- Number of full-time psychologists: 27 personnel
- Average number of users of FIT services annually, taking Budapest, Szeged and Szolnok together: 17,000 personnel/year
- Number of users of the services of job-seekers' clubs (4th quarter of 1998) 6,400 persons (of which almost 10% were new career entrants/job seekers).