

The Importance of Non Formal Education in a Formal World

Monica ROȘU

Consultant Marketing / HR

Trainer Marketing / Personal Branding

Abstract

The need for non formal education is becoming intense and more appreciated due to the fact that the formal educational system adapts too slowly in the socio - economic and cultural changes of our world. Non-formal education complements the formal education and only together lead to the reduction of unemployment, to the increase of self-confidence, to a world we can enjoy every day. Non formal education among students brings “motivation” which is not taught in universities, brings the experience of trainers in various fields they worked, acting as a button printed with big capitals letter saying: "Start Now". In this respect we worked with Romanian – American University in a pilot project, and the results was spectacular. This paper aims to present the importance of non formal education among students / graduates.

Keywords: Training, Non-formal Education, Personal Branding, Professional Career, Students

JEL Classification: J23, J24, M12, M13, M31

Introduction

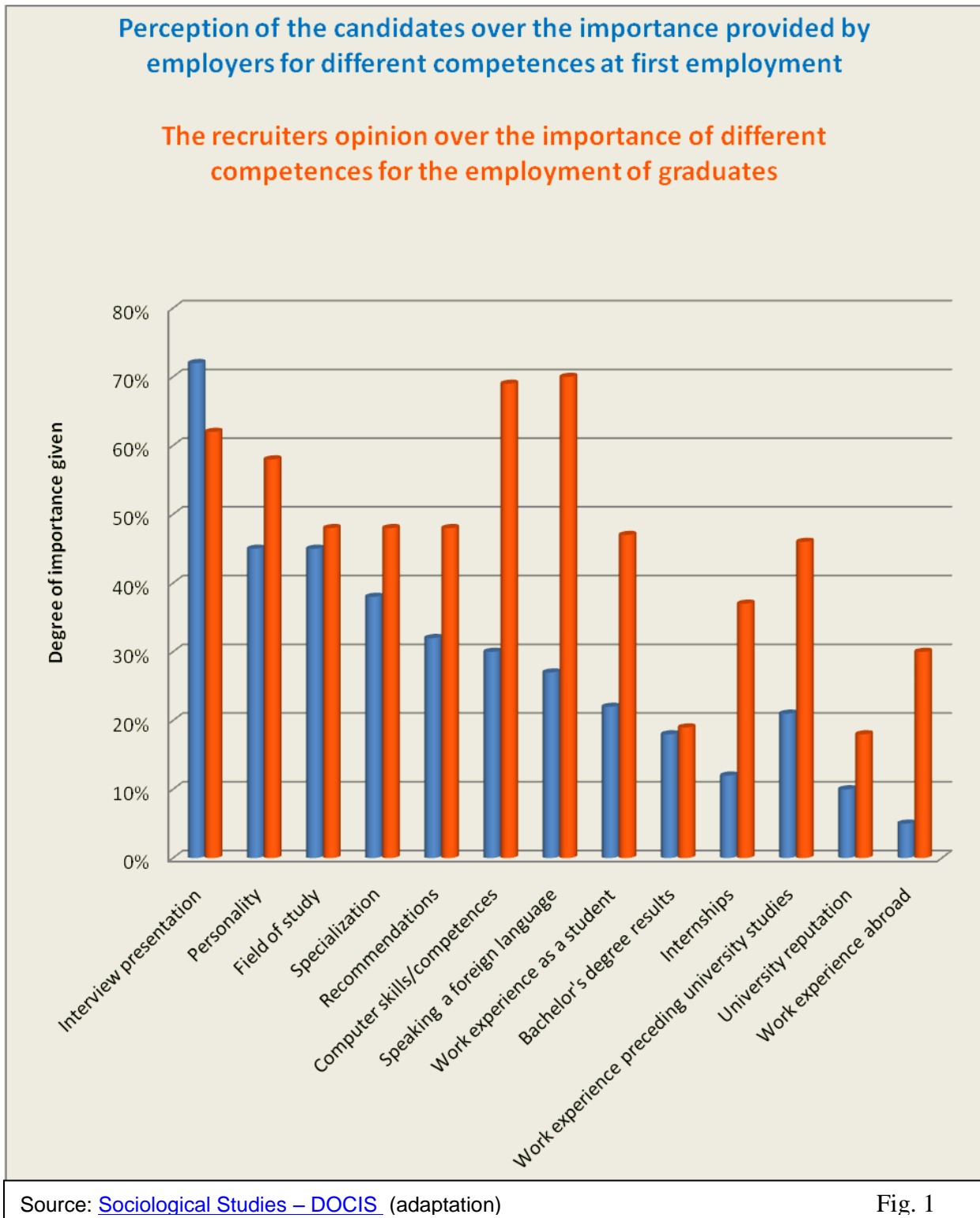
Non-formal education is a phrase mentioned for the first time in an international discourse about education in the late '60s and early '70s. In Romania was first time mentioned by UNICEF in 1997.

Non formal education can be described as an organized educational activity outside the existing formal system in order to meet the educational needs of a particular group / public that seeks clear learning objectives. While formal education uses an obligatory curriculum, non formal education curriculum is negotiated by group of students/ teachers/trainers to meet the targeted groups' needs. Trainers may be aware about the problems faced by the group from statistical studies as well and create a program that meets the needs for the group guided by those materials. This way the information that students can not achieve at the university can be acquired attending training programs such as seminars, workshops, in order to increase the chances of success in life both personally and professionally. In Romania approaches related to non-formal education (personal branding, professional development, lifelong learning) appear blurred among young people, so their way of thinking has become different than their teachers, parents, employers etc. Non formal education has the capacity to create intergenerational ties and encourage each individual to communicate efficiently, changing him into an active and responsible participant in his group's social life.

SITUATION:

Several studies have formed the basis for needs identification manifested by both students and employers about the level of employability.

- **Study N° 1:** According to the study conducted by DOCIS, there are perception differences (in many cases substantial) in regards to importance given by the employers and candidates in the recruitment process to certain skills and competencies. (ACPART, DOCIS, Fig. 1)



- **Study N^o. 2:** According to studies conducted by Catalyst Solutions, the graduates average wage expectations do not coincide with the average salaries offered to graduates by employers (Source: BBC - online edition)
- **Study N^o. 3:** According to the Youth Strategic Plan presented by Ministry of Youth and Sport for the period 2014-2014, a number of 71614 individuals, younger than 25 years old were registered on welfare in 2012, representing 14% of the unemployed registered person in Romania. In the next age category 25-30 are registered 40793 unemployed people, representing 8% of total unemployed people in Romania. As stated on the plan, one of the system's weaknesses is the indifference showed over the positive effect the non formal extracurricular activities proves to have on personality development of the youth.

TASK:

- To enhance students' knowledge on subjects related to employment process in order to establish a balance of student's and recruiter's perception regarding various skills and competencies.
- To clarify the issues related to salary expectations that students/graduates are not aware of especially if they participate to their first job interview.
- To accelerate the application process and rate of success based on skills acquired by students through non-formal education and contribute for a better insertion in the labor market facilitating the transition between education, and labor market.
- To increase the awareness among universities, teachers and students about non formal education and its importance for both students and universities.

ACTION:

I. Strategy:

To accomplish our task we decided to approach the students from 2 non formal educational perspectives: Personal Branding and Recruiting and Selection. The reason to choose this approach is that before the students decide what career suits them better they have to know who they really are, what are their values, how is their personal brand perceived, what would they

like to do and what are they good at and later on, they will be prepared to answer the question: “What career should I choose?” If the students/graduates/candidates don’t know who they really are, how are they going to convince a recruiter to hire them? Through the subjects we decided to discuss with students, they will be surprised to find out so many interesting things about themselves. They will complete different personality tests, value tests, and vocational tests. They can recognize the results but in the same time, more new information about themselves pop-up and engage their interest in finding more and build the competitive advantage they never thought of. As soon as they have a definition of themselves, they will be trained to become successful in the recruitment and selection process. They cannot get the best suited job if their personal brand is not well polished. The personal brand covers a lot of areas you have to work on but can be defined as an emotional response to the image or name of a particular person and each of us success depends on it.

So what does a student have to do before applying for a job? Brand himself. That means that he has to create the right kind of emotional response he expected people to have when they hear his name, see him online, or meet him in real life. And this response he is waiting for will better be good.

II. Establish the curricula:

- based on the results of these studies, we created a seminar and two workshops that were aimed mainly to improve the employability degree among candidates;
- the materials were designed to balance the perceptions, showing the students what a recruiter understand/analyze from each action / gesture / etc manifested by candidate. Inviting participants in the "recruiter’s backstage" we aimed to create a reality zoom of what should they expect as soon as they graduate the university and as well to make them aware that are responsible in terms of how they choose and manage their career and life.

We decided to create a group of 4 events to be held in February-March 2014.

- One seminar will be held in 2 different days so the students have a second opportunity to participate. The presentation was build in an attractive way, and will be held in a friendly, familiar atmosphere, with participants interaction. The seminar contains general information, statistics, issues, solutions and new methods

used by “Human Resources” and methods used by successful candidates, to identify the proper, best suited job/candidate.

- First workshop’s objective was to support students in finding more about themselves in order to find the best career path. (Test, role play, examples, discussions)
- Second workshop’s objective was to support students in attending a job interview in a professional manner. (Case study and interview simulation based on the “learn by doing” method)
- Total hours of training = 10 hours

III. Assure the trainers are prepared to offer higher standards of information.

Trainers educational background and work experience comes to cover in the most professional ways the established curricula. Their educational background:

Trainer 1:

- a) Bachelor degree – Marketing & Management
- b) Master degree – Marketing
- c) Certified trainer

Training subjects: Marketing, Personal Branding, Human Resources

Trainer 2:

- a) Bachelor degree – Psychology
- b) Master degree – Organizational and Human Resources Management
- c) Certified trainer

Training subjects: Human Resource Management, Personal Branding

IV. Set the details with Romanian-American University

(Date, time, duration, and all the presentation assets needed)

Expected outcomes

Students will be able to find a career path that suits them, useful to them and to society, to fulfill them professionally and personally. The result is desired by both: students/graduates and employers, and - not least by universities that prepare students for the present and future labor market.

RESULT

It was really rewarding to get the feedback and find out that participants were satisfied with the quality of the information, with the way it was transmitted, the degree of interactivity, and so on, which makes us believe that the assessment of needs that we developed at the beginning of this project was right and the information addressed to students were the ones they expected most. Analyzing the feedback from participants we realized that the collection of information we shared was very welcomed by students. The rate of employment was a reward of their participation will and our work. In first 2 weeks after the session of seminars and workshops, 10% of the participating students contacted us to announce that they went to interviews and are now employed based mostly on the information they received on seminars and workshops.

CONCLUSION

We often describe the type of business we run using terms like B2B or B2C.(formal terms with no emotional impact) Whichever you choose, the business works because of people. Products, services provided by your company may not be sold if they are not accompanied by the emotion conveyed by the staff. This is why we are happy to present an approach agreed by those who deal in general with non formal education, and this is called H2H. (Bryan Kramer, 2014). Human 2 Human is a new concept showing the importance of people in any activities and mostly in the tertiary sector, today when the social network become our ID and non formal education has a strong effect on our way to progress next to formal education. What will we do with all the theory and practice if we are not aware of who we are and how we are, if we do not know what we like to do and what we can really do. How can an individual without a developed personal brand and professional identity be a part of your business? This is where our main desire comes from. It refers to train individuals to become better person with strong and better professional skills using different methods than universities does, using interactive classes, freedom of thoughts, empathy, etc. Heaving well trained people we will get a better turnover and a better place to live.

We would like to underline, that there is a real need for such seminars and workshops. Non formal education is supporting students differently than what they get through formal education in the university and students appreciate this approach. It comes to complete them as people and professionals as well.

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Monica ROȘU and Romanian-American University Students