



Journal of Community Positive Practices

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JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY POSITIVE PRACTICES

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

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- **File format:** Microsoft Word
- **Text format:** Times New Roman 12, 1 line spacing, with diacritics if the text is in Romanian
- **Information about the author/ authors (a maximum of 250 words):** for each author it must be mentioned the academic title, current position, institution to which it belongs, contact details – telephone and e-mail. For the selected authors, all this information will be made public. The submission of a manuscript implies that the author certifies that the material is not copyrighted and is not currently under review for another publication. If the article has appeared or will appear in another publication, details of such publication must be disclosed to the editors at the time of submission.
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QUALITATIVE EVALUATION: INTERDISCIPLINARY MASTER

Corina CACE¹

Abstract: *The goals of this evaluation refer to: process evaluation and results of the master program (the theoretical component of training); program relevance evaluation in terms of the current activities from the university (acquisitions and transfers) and identification of the obstacles and opportunities for practical application.*

The impact of the master program was performed using document analysis (master program design, curricula, selection methods, needs analysis for formation, subsumption to the strategy of the Academy of Economic Studies) and content analysis (12 interviews with trainees) focused on subjects which are correlated with the goals of the master program. The analysis monitors 4 primary (internal) dimensions: theoretical-formative, applicative, beneficial-participative, change, in relation with 3 secondary (external) dimensions, which strengthen, facilitate and integrate with the primary dimensions: general aspects, previous training/ need for training, group and group dynamics.

As regards the results, the general feature is the: acquisition of teaching, research and communication in English knowledge; development of a behavioural change in relation to the students, with the research activity and within the scientific community at the national and international levels and identification of obstacles that perceived as pertaining to the self of the trainees or at the institutional level.

Keywords: *evaluation, teaching, research, communication, English.*

INTRODUCTION

A new philosophy was born, in the context of „moral crisis of good intention’ appear what, now, we can see the evaluation of public programmes. Evaluation is a systematic pursuit of the valorization or value of an object, but also a systematic acquirement and assessment of the information, for receiving feedback from an object (Cace, 2002: 15);

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also, performing of an evaluation involves decisions concerning the continuation, completion or change the program (Negut et. al, 2011: 61). Main purposes of evaluation are: measuring progress against program objectives, identifying strengths and weaknesses, analyze program effectiveness, cost-benefit analysis and better planning and organization of activities (Cace, 2003: 31) Very important is to see the benefits of the programs, what are they 'doing'? Why they were created for? Hence it is necessary to assess the benefits if the program, how much any education program, in particular, improves education. That's why we have to evaluate them, to see how it does so, and how it can do so more effectively.

Chen (2005) realized an analogy between fishing and program evaluation. Why we can learn from the 'art of fishing'? First, we may consider evaluation approaches and methods as being analogues to fishing equipment. But, as evaluator, being familiar with approaches and methods it is not sufficient for a good job. By this meaning evaluation, and evaluation research, becomes real and scientific only when methodological approaches are real closer by theory and also closer by contextual knowledge. That's way is important to have a conceptual framework of program evaluation research (program theory) (Tripodi and all, 1986). The framework grasps how the evaluation taxonomy can guide the choice of evaluation approach and the methodological aspects, too. Evaluation methodology is the whole system of „roads' going to an 'objectual reality'. Using diverse methods we are going to find a „real object'. But, for this, we need something more: techniques and procedures. This is the reason for considering evaluation a science. It has knowledge bases able to describe all three dimensions used in science definition: ontology, epistemology and methodology (Shadish and al., 1999: 42).

Program evaluation assumes that 'social problem solving' could be improved (by incremental improvements in on-going program, by better design of a new program, stop the program if it is bad and replace it with better ones) (Rossi, 1982; Rossi, 1985). That's way is important to elaborate an applied evaluation design to the specific case that is analysed. Qualitative research is more appropriate for this study case, because of its features: appropriateness of methods and theories; perspectives of the participants and their diversity; reflexivity of the researcher and the research and variety of approaches and methods (Flick, 2006: 14-16). Education quality can be explain by different points of view, that will grow the roots of qualitative analysis (Van de Bergh, 1995).

In teaching process, the testing and evaluation of students have an important role in enriching knowledge and taking control of learning (Penca Palčić, 2008: 125). The teaching process , including "student-centered learning" (Cace C. et al., 2011: 123), involves dynamic and reflective interaction between students-teacher-content knowledge (Halloran, 2010:133).

Context. Master 'English Language Education And Research Communication For Business And Economics'

This MA, at institutional level, is a part of the Academy of Economic Studies strategy for Professional Development. Is intended for academics, teachers, researchers, medical doctors, with an interest in developing their competencies in the mentioned areas, who

may then contribute, as facilitating the development of specific skills in academic and research contexts.

The main **aims of the program** (Muresan, 2008: 161) are:

- to contribute to improving teaching methodology, with a focus on the needs of HE for business and economics in an English- medium academic context;
- to facilitate the development of advanced communication competencies in English, both for academic purposes and for international communication in a variety of professional settings;
- to contribute to improving research practice, with a focus on both methodological aspects and related communication skills for presenting and publishing research outcomes internationally.

The basic principle guiding the methodology and content of the formation in this educational program was that of interdisciplinary. The argument is the ‘in-depth knowledge’ specific to the two activities conducted in any university: teaching and research (Bardi and al., 1999; Bardi, 2007). Leaving from the identified¹ need for formation, a fair number of themes have been supplied during the actual training.

EDUCATION	RESEARCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating professional and communication skills for teaching and learning in English in economic field; • Improving communication skills/ English for Academic purposes; • Quality Standards in Higher Education; • Educational management competencies; • Multidisciplinary approach; • Design and management of projects in education field; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Advanced communication skills in English;</i> • <i>Partnerships (between universities and/ with economic environment);</i> • <i>Academic writing requirements;</i> • <i>Effective writing for scholarly publication;</i> • <i>Genre analysis and critical discourse analysis applied in economics;</i> • <i>Research methodology in social sciences;</i> • <i>Correlating theory and practice;</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Developing critical and creative thinking skills for business studies, partnerships and projects;</i> • <i>Global issues and strategic perspectives for Romania: an interdisciplinary approach;</i> • <i>International criteria and practises of (self-) evaluation, peer-review, and feedback at all levels (students, teachers, institutions).</i> 	

Adapted after: Conceptual framework of the Interdisciplinary Master Programme. Muresan, 2008: 164.

The **methodology used by the formation program** relied on: a team of trainers consisted of experimented Romanian specialists and reputed foreign specialists, both European and worldwide; an organised **formation session** by modules from various disciplines; the utilisation of active - participative methods such as: heuristics, lectures,

debates and case studies. In an attempt to provide for an interactive working environment, the feed-back and questions from the trainees have been permanently encouraged and taken into consideration. The new *teaching methods* are used to create a new attitude, to facilitate the acquisition of the taught knowledge and to consolidate the abilities. And the *trainees* became more accustomed to some specific types of intervention by role plays initiated by the trainers.

Evaluation of the Training Program: Results and their Impact on the Trainees

Research methodology

In this paper is evaluated a Interdisciplinary Master Program: *English Language Education and Research Communication for Business and Economics* from Faculty of International Business and Economics, Academy of Economic Studies-Bucharest, who functioned along three learning years: 2006-2008, 2007-2009 and 2008-2010.

This study which aims to determine the **impact of the master program** was performed using the following **methods of research / evaluation**:

- Document analysis
- Content analysis (**technical**) on the interviews with the graduates of the 3 graduation series.

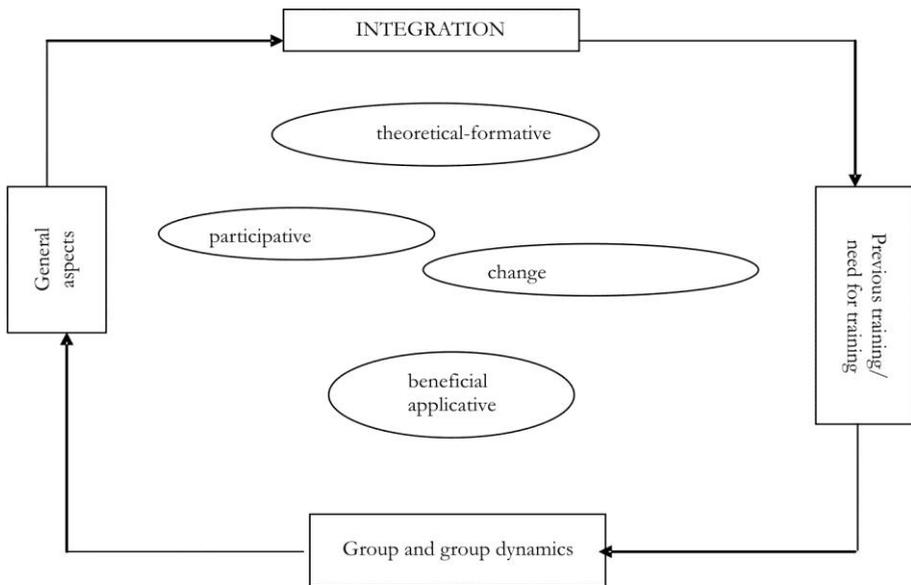
Document analysis included master program design, curricula, methods for trainee selection and analysis of the needs for formation, subsumption of the master program to the strategy of the Academy of Economic Studies for career development and institutional development based on the quality standards of the higher education.

A number of 12 interviews have been conducted in order to get a consistent feed-back from the trainees. Most of the interviewed trainees which attended this master program are university teaching staff. A few exceptions exist though: one person is a teacher in the pre-university education system, one is researcher outside the educational system.

The content analysis of the interviews conducted with the aid of the interview guidebooks focused on subjects which are correlated with the goals of the master program (**problem centred interview**) (Yin, 2002). This interview is characterized by three central aspects (criteria): Problem centring; Object orientation; Process orientation

Evaluation Results

The analysis monitors 4 **primary** (internal) dimensions: theoretical-formative, applicative, beneficial-participative, change, in relation with 3 **secondary** (external) dimensions, which strengthen, facilitate and integrate with the primary dimensions: general aspects, previous training/need for training, group and group dynamics.

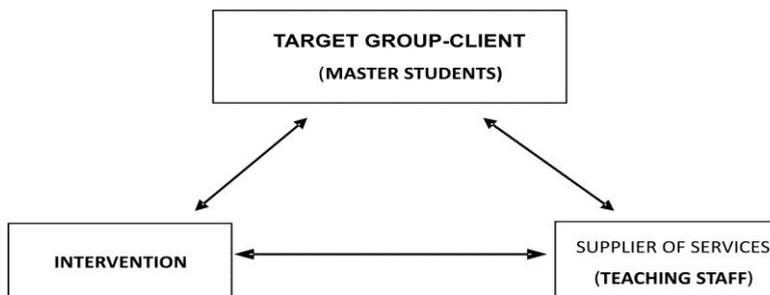


Primary/ internal dimensions of the training program

1. Theoretical component of training;
2. Applicative component of the knowledge, abilities and competencies after graduating the master program;
3. Benefits of attending the master program
4. Suggestions for improvement / directions of change

The theoretical component of formation

Involves four major variables: process, content, methodology and communication in English. Within *process component* can be identified three types of relations.



The methodology of formation usually presumes a triple procedure: need to evaluate the formation requirements of the trainees; adequate selection of the teaching techniques of formation to be used during the process of teaching; evaluation of the process of formation in order to get a full image of its results (Craft, 1996).

The theoretical component of formation actually refers to the usefulness of the program of master studies. The usefulness is seen as an aggregate value of the *contents*, *teaching methodology* (specific to adult education), of the *group management* and, last but not least, of the modalities and forms of *communication in English*. The trainees from the third series and the graduates of the first two graduations series have been interviewed on these aspects.

Their individual answers, as personal opinions, are diversified and cover a wide range. At first sight one may say that the initial formation (specialisation through master studies) plays an important role in evaluating the usefulness of the master program. It directs the answer and, especially, adds nuances to it.

'As PhD Student and junior assistant teacher, this master programme helped me a lot on different layers (communication, knowledge, research skills, self-assessment)' (junior assistant teacher, Economic background);

'The program was organised exclusively on 'humanist' or 'philological' bases'; it was interesting and it could have been „much more challenging' (trainee, mathematics background);

'Program of highest usefulness, inter-curricular approach, indispensable for the continuous formation of the university teaching staff' (trainee, socio-humanistic background).

The interesting **curricula** were a support for the academic teaching-research activities.

'I appreciate that our master program is very useful for the continuous learning of a university teacher because with the assistance of our trainers we improved our teaching style, our evaluation skills and our proficiency in writing scientific articles.' (Trainee, finances -second graduation series)

On the same topic, the curricula, in terms of novelty, the respondents had progressive evaluations: from *'different approaches of known themes or concepts'*, *'novelty'*, invoking expressly the *'novel character'*. Regarding the *'answer to the trainees' needs'* or *'focusing on the students'* the respondents mentioned that:

'[curricula]....perfectly adapted to the interests of the master students, brief, synthetic presentation of the course, systematization and accessibility for all disciplines';

'addresses both the scientific research and the process of teaching; maybe too much stress on the research part, but this didn't bother me at all';

'[curricula]...accompanied by a wealth of materials for documentation...'

The master program itself has, intrinsically, a challenging element seen through the prism of interdisciplinary. This variable is valued by the participants in the formation program.

The teaching methodology (teaching methods, means, techniques and procedures) has been positively appreciated by the trainees. The diversity of the teaching methods was

specific to the adult people (role plays, debates) targeting, besides the aspects of knowledge, those of the group communication. The transfer of knowledge was done using the methods of active participation. The general perception is related to the use of the 'new teaching methods', which are stirring: *'modern, catching, properly chosen connections'*. The flexible character of the methodology is praised, which is continuously adapted to the needs of the trainees (level of the group).

'The teaching staff endeavoured to adapt the teaching and evaluation style to the level of knowledge and experience of the trainees.'

The trainees appreciated the diversity of the teaching methods and, at the same time, another very important aspect, their interactive character. They have perceived thus the useful cognitive transfer in the formation of skills, habits, even reasonable behaviours and actual competencies.

'diversified methods, predominantly interactive, focusing on the development of creativeness, problem solving.'

'practical aspects, research mainly'

The perception of the training course usefulness through the prism of the management is favourable. The administration of the master program is praised, as well as the competence of the trainers and the activity with the group of trainees, the functional and beneficial network of communications, and the contributions to the dynamics of the group.

'I think that the management of the master course was very good because:

- *we have been informed beforehand on the schedule for the entire term;*
- *teaching staff of high intellectual standards, some teaching abroad;*
- *socialization between the trainees on the one hand, and between the trainees and the teachers, on the other hand'*

The trainees noticed the flexibility of the program, its adaptation to the necessities of the group: *'malleable structure, high professional standard, modesty, will to share own know-how'* and the permanent bond, via various channels, between the teachers and the trainees.

The **communication in English** is perceived as being at a very good level. Even if in the beginning of the master program there were people with a lower ability of communication in English. Gradually, the communication barriers have been removed and they acquired abilities of conversation and writing in English. Other people observed the positive attitude towards the *'intensive use of English'*; the dynamics, however, was influenced by the heterogeneity of the group in terms of this capacity of the trainees:

A gain was the formation of skills and the acquisition of the techniques of *'writing and formulating texts for publishing'*.

The **quality of teaching** accompanies, unavoidably, the perception on the usefulness of the training course. The framework of the analysis is given by the interlocking the

psycho-socio-pedagogical and managerial aspects. It looks at the ways that trainers create social and physical environments for learning by examining classroom management. This is due primarily to the correlations existing within the triad teaching-learning-evaluating and, second, to the multitude of factors (affectivity, motivation, will) of whose interference learning depends (mainly the adult learning). Third, the quality of teaching is perceived in terms of trainer's capacity to provide the group of trainees with factors of satisfaction and motivation.

'The quality of teaching during this master programme was excellent for most of the courses, because the teachers involved in this process put also <a piece of their heart> in it'.

Without digressing from the specific framework of 'expert teaching', a list of capacities is provided, which define the 'expert teachers-trainers' (experienced, effective teachers who have developed solutions for classroom problems) and 'reflective practitioners' (thoughtful and incentive).

'special scientific standing throughout the entire program of teaching'

The quality of teaching is related to the novelty-bearing information. The students appreciated here the attitude of the trainers and their openness towards the new, as well as their capacity to convey information via actively participative methods, whose finality was to acquire new competencies, comparable to those acquired in reference universities.

'The teachers endeavoured to come up with up-to-date information and to develop in the trainees, through quality teaching, the abilities indispensable for an elite university'

Teaching was not regarded strictly as a formal activity whose purpose is to transmit information but, by going beyond the strict framework of the classroom, it is considered as a support, a real help and an answer to the problems confronting the trainees in the classrooms when their turn to teach the others comes.

From the way in which the trainees appreciate the quality of teaching, one can readily notice the influence of the affectivity factor which acts directly on the teaching – learning relation, strengthening thus the acquisition of information. And, yielding, in the same time, an active behaviour.

'No doubt, each of them put everything better inside him/her in terms of professionalism, in order to make this master program a success; modern and diversified methods, implementation of methods used by reputed universities. And a lot of soul.'

'Very good. Interactive, well documented, fluent, attractive, modern'

Application of methods (as personal acquirement during the master program) in day-to-day activity (as specialist, teaching staff of Academy of Economic Studies from Bucharest) - the following variables were proposed for particularisation: teaching, research, organisational management, communication in English.

In terms of the transfer of knowledge, of the direct application and transfer into every day activity, 'changes' in attitude and behaviour have been noticed.

'Certainly, my activity has been influenced by the participation in this program; however, I think it is too early now to be fully aware of the way I have been influenced'

'I think I improved my teaching style, as well as the style of doing research, investigations'

Teaching is the first monitored variable. The trainees have assumed the learnt methods and applied them into their own activity, at least in their relation with the students.

'For instance, when I studied what kinds of errors the teachers make, I identified myself with some of them and that is why I tried afterwards to avoid doing those mistakes'

They consider that the new competencies they acquired through this program of learning have made their everyday activity more pleasant.

'I applied very much of what I have learnt during this master program: I organised for the students some special seminars of critical thinking, which they enjoyed a lot and considered very useful, we did, writing, academic writing (I would have anyhow did it, it was in the curriculum, but this way it was much more easier)'

The previous dimension referred to the actively participative methods used by the teachers during the training sessions during this master program. The use of these methods prompted the trainees to 'assume' these methods, which made their relation with the students, the teaching part, mainly, to get an interactive character. The teaching style is different and the stress is on the teaching methods which stimulate students; creativity and entrepreneurship.

'interactive (multidirectional communication, stressing on students' creativity and entrepreneurship) team work, case studies'

The differences perceived by the trainees in terms of own behavior in the classroom refers to aspects pertaining to the quality of teaching. They consider that they upgraded their teaching style as result of the new acquisitions, either in terms of content, or in terms of the way information is presented, or in terms of teaching method.

'higher standard of the teaching done in the classroom (theoretical part and diversification of the methods); actual utilization of the methods acquired and practiced during the seminars (for instance team working, text analysis)'

The transfer produced in the field of the research activity is the next step of our analysis. The transfer of knowledge and of information taking place, as teaching mechanism, is constantly changing, it's directed by the teachers, but will be the result of the student's own action of discovery.

The importance of research must not be overlooked beyond its formal, legal framework within the teaching activity. One of the special goals of this master program is to initiate the trainees in the research activity. It is meant to open the road to the evaluative research for every teaching activity (also as action research). It acts to establish the critical thinking and the creative thinking. It joins qualitative approaches with quantitative activities both in socio-human research and in the sphere of the economics and international relations. The gain, as described by the graduates of this master program, is huge.

I use what I learnt [...] to write professional articles’.

The challenge of research was a response to trainees’ necessities, at a certain level, being a novelty and, at another one, and in-depth instruction on the background of the confrontation of ideas. Their present activity is influenced by the information acquired during the courses which materialized in actual competencies.

I acquired basic notions, very useful, new things about statistics and various types of research’

I learnt some research methods and some of them I used subsequently’.

The contact of the teachers was not fruitless. The acquisitions were obvious. The methodological aspects of research approached during the training sessions yielded concrete results:

The discussions with the teachers about the way to manage a research project, from documentation to finalization, were extremely useful and I could build my own winning strategy for an international project for which I received funding from a foreign university (this project involved several aspects pertaining to English and to the research management)’.

The argument, for which the variable of organisational management is subsumed to the dimension quantifying the transfer of information, is double. On the one hand, we take into consideration the importance of the management of the class/group of students for the acquisition of the desired behaviors (competencies, capacities and skills); on the other hand, we take into consideration the importance of the management of the class/group of students in relation with and for translation towards the institutional level¹. In the beginning of the analysis of this dimension we mentioned the triad teaching-learning-evaluation as well as the importance of the affection, motivational and volitional factors for learning. Teaching ‘resides’ at the interference of the psycho-socio-pedagogical planes. The question is which is the relation between the management of the class/group of students that learn and teaching. All the psycho-socio-pedagogical elements that influence, support and potentiate teaching may have a managerial signification. In turn, the managerial aspects may have a psycho-socio-pedagogical significance on learning which, in fact, is a behavioral change.

The trainees acquired new skills and competencies which yielded new behaviors. These new behaviors, in turn, have effect on class management (relation with the students), which generates the desired behavior in the latter learning at another qualitative level, produced within a context imposed by factors of satisfaction and enhanced by other factors of motivation.

I used what I learnt within the activity of technical and operational testing-evaluation of the products and systems undergoing research or under implementation’.

New behaviors were also noticed in terms of the attitude towards the educational management in general. The application of managerial processes and actions is in agreement with the science of management, combined with the principles of education, particularly when we speak of the school organization as a complex social system.

¹ The aspect of the institutional relations will be analyzed subsequently

In terms of communication in English, every trainee did better after the conclusion of the master program. Irrespective of the competency level of the trainees at the beginning of the master program, they all appreciate that the core of this program was the English language. The effect of communication in English is appreciated in relation to certain relations whom the trainees developed within the academic environment/ 'development of the pedagogical language'; either towards article writing in English and their public presentation or in the relation with the students via the debates organized with them in the classroom:

'after I graduated the master program, I attended international scientific conferences, where I presented the articles in English'

'I communicate during the common actions with the foreign partners (presentations, action preparation, tests, equipment delivery and negotiations)'

An inventory of the favourite aspects:

- *'The atmosphere during the courses'*
- *'The excellent communication with the teachers and their unconditional support'*
- *'The availability of the participants for dialogue and debates'*
- *'Openness of the master students towards initiatives'*
- *'The assessment process'*
- *'The very sound training of the teaching staff'*
- *'The practical character of the topics taught during this program'*
- *'The interactive character of the master program'*
- *'The discussions with the invited teachers from foreign universities'*
- *'The fact that I got more trust in me and in my capacity to communicate in English'*
- *'The flexibility of the program'*
- *'Even if there is no research experience, the first steps can be taken during this master program'*
- *'The meeting with colleagues from AES Bucharest participation in joint projects and discussion of everybody's personal experience'*
- *'I actually understood how a material should be written (research results) for publishing'*
- *'The quality of the training'*
- *'The information that we received was thus structured as to provide maximum utility'*

After reading this 'inventory' the conclusion that yields is that the interviewed people are involved emotionally; the feeling of belonging to a teaching community is predominant. The nature of the answers, even though it covers a wide range catches the aspects which, without exaggerating, target the objectives of this master program. The

mechanisms of action: the cognitive apparatus, the methodological one, the program management, had the role to meet trainees' necessities. This training program combines the pedagogical vision of 'student focusing' with the vision related to the scientific content.

An inventory of the negative aspects

Synthetically, the negative aspects are related more to each individual interviewed person and refer to the regret of not having enough time to attend all the activities of the master program. They have no connection whatsoever with the organization or management of the program.

- *'Lack of international acknowledgement of the program; although the program does an effort to get international, it is just a start which should be developed a lot.'*
- *'More classes on project management, research methods, article writing for publishing in international databases of ISI journals and classes of „writing in English'.*
- *'In some periods the schedule was heavily loaded'*
- *'The class hours between 6 - 9 p.m., when I was very tired and didn't have the yield I wanted'*
- *'Some our colleagues who were very advanced with their English were behaving condescendingly with the beginners in English'*

The component of knowledge, abilities and competencies application after the graduation of the master program

The 'problems' referred to by the interviewed people are in fact negative contexts and limit situations perceived by them in their everyday activity (of teaching or researching). The answer behaviour of all the interviewed people has a common explanation the specificity / philosophy of the master program which:

- a) raised several question marks regarding the 'own behavior in the classroom' or towards own research activity (becoming aware, which is a gain);

'An important problem is that there still are students whom no matter how hard I try to determine to participate actively in the classes, they are still displaying a passive and disinterested attitude'

- b) produced a certain reaction of reply (an intention, or a latent behavioral state, which is also a gain)

'Student motivation, the lack of time to prepare the classes/ for a quality individual feedback for the students/ for the research (heavy loading of the teaching norms, very large, even disproportionate, sometimes, number of students in a group'

- c) it determined the seeking and choice of the instruments by which the reply reaction becomes manifest (overt behavior in everyday activity, which is a gain) and, actually, aware to become, actually, a desire outcome.

The reasonable problem solving behavior is related directly to the way in which the problem is identified and particularly on the way people become aware of it. If the problem is perceived wrongly, which happens many times, its solving yields arguable actions (both in terms of teaching and research activity), straying from the essence of the teaching activity, in this case even from the goals of the master program.

'the most important problems confronting me in my teaching activity pertain to the infrastructure: not all classrooms have video projector, the groups of students attending courses or seminars are far too large. The main problems challenging my research activity regard the lack of financing and the institutional obstacles hindering the participation in conferences abroad to disseminate the research findings, to validate them, to improve them, so that they can be subsequently published in a reputed journal'

The bulk of answers, however, reflect the aware and active-positive attitude towards the described problems and towards the teaching/research methods. The chosen teaching methods show that the transfer has occurred. A correlation with the variables of the dimension analyzed previously (the theoretical component of training, usefulness) strengthens this assertion.

The interviewed trainees show that both in their activity with the students and in their research activity, the competencies acquired during the master program are obvious. The topics of debates are selected to develop thinking by involving various operations (analysis, synthesis, and comparison), 'creative thinking', 'critical thinking'. Teaching is characterized by 'interactivity'. And the use of active participative methods elicits the interest of the students for study.

'simulation of real activities'

'I use interactive methods any time I have the opportunity to do it. I use the video projector for PowerPoint presentations; the text analysis in the seminar because I want my students to develop their thinking, not just to reproduce what I teach them'

'During the seminar activities I use: case studies, games, group activities, software tools in order to facilitate the understanding of different economic modelling techniques'

The teaching and research activity is full of obstacles. However, some opinions show that the trainees are aware of the importance of the knowledge accumulated during the master program. They acknowledge the build up of competencies, but their use is blocked by the (institutional) lack of 'international collaborations'. Another aspect that have been expressed is the lack of agreement between the competencies of the master students and their cognitive level.

'Because the number of students paying course fees is very large and because the admission grade was lowered to 5 even at the best rated faculties of AES Bucharest, sometimes I have to adapt the teaching level to the intellectual and interest level of the students. Thus, the students with a high potential will be affected because I can not teach at the level I would like to'

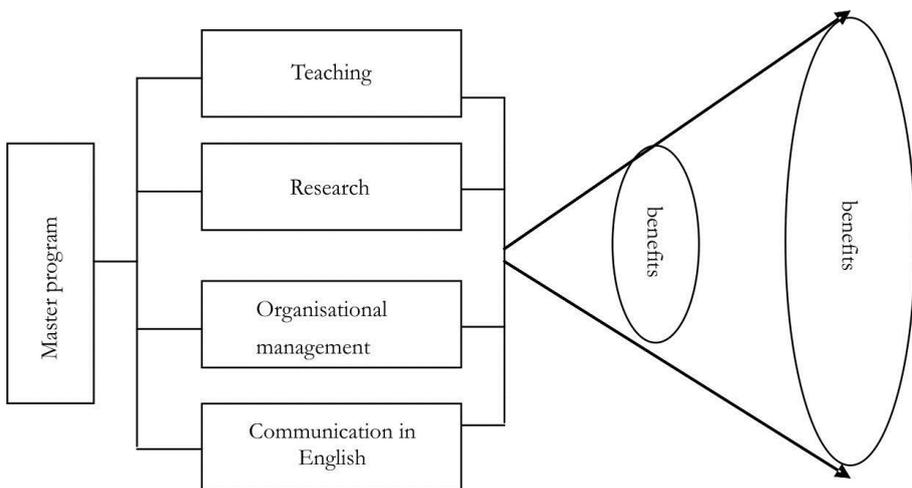
The mentioned obstacles are related, most times, to the institutional dimension, and less to the personal dimension. The institutional aspects may be considered as a 'given fact' and the response reactions are minimal. The personal dimension relates to the finality of the master program. The observable behaviour is considered to be the result of the accumulations gathered during the master program.

„Lack of time, large number of classes / large number of students in a group, lack of motivation for the students to attend the seminars'.....

'research: lack of a team. I do research only on an individual basis or in teams with people outside the institution where I work'

Benefits of attending the master program (short-term and long-term benefits)

The benefits of the master program is evaluated in terms of trainees on the basis of their perceptions about master program influence on their teaching activity, research activity, organizational management and communication in English, and about the dynamics on these influence over time.



In terms of the *benefits for teaching*, behavioural changes are obvious in the classroom, following the acquisition of knowledge. On the short term, either existing behaviours are improved/ perfected or new competencies have been established. The classroom activity is perceived as having been reorganised. The teaching objectives are correlated to the volume and quality of the contents. The teaching strategy is directly influenced by the information acquired during this master program. These behavioural changes lead to a better relation with the students. On the long term, a creative,

analytical, organized, student-focused behaviour is expected. The acquired knowledge allow designing strategies which to better the relation with the students (in terms of communication and results of the students) which to strengthen the relation between teaching–learning–evaluation.

In terms of the *benefits for research*, on the short term, there are the methodological aspects. The interviewed persons also perceived real benefits, new knowledge supporting the writing of research reports and of scientific articles prepared for publishing or even published. On the long term, the benefits are aiming towards a structured research activity. They are evaluated in relation to the involvement in national and international projects as efficient activity (from project design to its implementation and management). The knowledge acquired during the master program will play a favourable role in the future publishing activity of the trainees.

The component of *benefits to organizational management*, on the short term, refers to the system of knowledge and information, as novelty. A new vision on the organizational management emerges, development of the system of interpersonal relations, communication, a new way of evaluating at the institutional level. On the long term, the benefits are perceived in relation to the abilities to implement the learnt methods, to the improvement of communication at the institutional level.

The component of *communication in English* is rich in actual benefits on the short term. The range of answers is wide and gradually increasing qualitatively, from learning the language to designing a course in English. A benefit of the master program is that it strengthened and developed the ability of communication (in terms of speaking and writing abilities). On the long term, the finality is the development of course lectures in English and doing the course lectures and seminars also in English. The master program favoured the trainees to reach a stage of knowledge that allows both the documentation for scientific articles, and actually writing the articles and presenting them publicly in English within the scientific community.

Suggestions for improvement and direction for change

First direction for change takes in consideration increasing horizontal communication between all stakeholders of masterly program (initiators of masterly program, trainers, students, graduators) and representatives of all departments and faculties to extent interactive methods and teaching methodology at the institutional level. That means transfer of knowledge in a progressive way and in the end the whole institution become more flexible being able to respond to the different challenges (Gaspar, 2000).

Second, show the importance of research centered approach and applicative component of it in direct correlation with student's previous specialization.

From the international point of view, the suggestion includes the institutional recognition of the MA through partnership design and develops with universities and research centers' witch promote similar educational programs.

Conclusions

In this paper, the author evaluates the process, the results of the master program, the program relevance in terms of the current activities from the university and identified the obstacles and opportunities for practical application.

Regarding the theoretical component of training, all respondents appreciated positively the build up of information and knowledge during the master program. The individual interviews confirm the positive evaluation of the training courses: the general feature is the **acquisition of knowledge in the field of teaching, research and communication in English.**

Regarding the practical application component involving the accumulated knowledge and acquired abilities, most of the evaluations are positive. The acquisitions and the transfer of knowledge yielded an obvious **behavioural change in relation to the students, with the research activity and within the scientific community at the national and international levels.**

Regarding the acknowledgement/identification of the obstacles and opportunities for the practical application of the acquired knowledge, there is a bi-dimensional perception of the obstacles and of the solutions proposed to go past these obstacles. The first dimension reveals obstacles that perceived as pertaining to the self of the trainees; the proposed solutions refer the short-term or long-term benefits resulting from the **new competencies that were acquired through the master program.** The second dimension is specific to the obstacles perceived at the institutional level, to which not many solutions can be proposed.

The qualitative evaluations yielded several conclusions:

- a) The master program provided the trainees a complex presentation of the types of intervention required by the *teaching activity*, by the *research activity* and by the *class management* (specific to the learning groups), on the background of stimulating continuous *communication in English only*. Improving the language skills, students will be more likely to benefit from a mobility program (Kovačić et.al., 2009: 36).
- b) One of the main gains of the *training* was the establishment of a new attitude of the professionals for the critical thinking and for the creative thinking regarding the active teaching methods and regarding the options for *intervention in the class*. This contributed to the shift from the predominant attitude directed towards a unidirectional speech, to an attitude focused on the students and on the active participation in the classroom. Therefore, school quality is directly influenced by the student participation (Kovač et al., 2010: 347). The learning process is more efficient 'from the mini lectures with feedback and (reflective) analysis and least from reading and discussing professional literature' (Marentič Požarnik, 2009: 356). That's way, it's necessary to empower students to 'cultivate their independent learning skills and not be penalized for making mistakes when they do attempt new techniques and skills' (Halloran, 2010: 138). More than that, performance evaluation of teaching by the students plays an important role in process improvement. Especially when teaching material is clear and adapted for cognitive level of students (Deković-Kesovija, 2011: 185).

c) Overall, the training program provided strong and sustained arguments for an integrated approach of the *research* component. The research component has been presented as a very complex activity which operates at multiple levels:

- methodological (coexistence of the disciplines which approach different methodologies): quantitatively; qualitatively;
- relational-interpersonal (accomplished and evaluated research activity): individual, group;
- in evolution: by training session, by groups of training sessions; at master program level;
- curricular: mono- ,trans- ,interdisciplinary.

In terms of process aspects, the trainees evaluated as efficient the organization of the training sessions. According to the opinion of the trainees, the discussions on very practical topics were beneficial. And some of the accumulated knowledge and acquired capabilities already are implemented in projects and applications, which shows their practical applicability

Besides the change of attitude, the feeling of belonging to a professional community and the establishment of a professional identity were very important results for the trainees. The need for training through this master program was strongly supported by the participants. The argument is, as added value, the system of interpersonal relations that has been established within the group and which has thereafter been expanded at the institutional level. An interdepartmental educational and relational structure is thus fostered, which is beneficial both to the development of future partnerships within the university and to the development of the university.

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RECIPROCITY OF COMMUNITY FIELD WORK PRACTICUM: THE CASE OF OPEN COMMUNITY PLACEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

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Abstract: *Field work is considered to be the most vital part of social work education across the globe. The element of field work is visible in almost all curriculum frameworks, even though there are variations in the credit and methods allotted for it. Generally field work practicum in India consists of observation visits, concurrent field work, summer placement and block placement. Open Community Placement (OCP) is an Indian model of concurrent field work which is widely practiced in the country apart from the institutional placement. Rural villages are preferred to be the potential locations for the student's placement for concurrent field work as it facilitates the trainee to understand the magnitude of rural problems, possible intervention strategies and working models. There is higher demand of trained manpower for working with the rural issues in India. This necessitates social work profession to engage their young trainees proactively with the rural issues. The trainees placed in open communities are closely works with the local institutions, stakeholders and clients under the guidance of a faculty supervisor. Different methods of social work are being practiced during the span of placement. Present paper is based on the experience of placing students in rural community for fieldwork. This paper tries to highlight the reciprocal advantages which students, faculties and community had through these placements. Information were collected from student trainees (those who are undergoing training and completed), alumnus, social work educators (who guide the students for Open Community Placement) and from the community. Two school of social work which practicing Open Community Placement (OCP) was selected for the analysis. The analysis shows higher implications of Open Community Placement (OCP) in Social Work education and practice.*

Keywords: *Reciprocity, Community, Field Work Practicum, Open Community Placement.*

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Introduction

Field work practicum is the heart and soul of social work education. It is not merely the application of theory into practice as conventionally told and heard. It is a conscious effort to experience, explore and analyze the social work practice in the real life settings. It is an inevitable ingredient that molds a professional with the skills, competence and insights on the socio-economic and political happenings around them. Field work facilitates the inculcation of humanistic values and development of professional attitudes. In addition, it adds to knowledge, and imparts a perspective to deal with human problems which relate to the self, between the self and others, and between human being and their environment (R.R. Singh, 1997). Field work provides an opportunity for testing and validating theoretical underpinnings and practice modules in a pragmatic manner with different sections of the population and with diverse issues. The contribution of fieldwork placement is praised for its role in growing student skills, knowledge, and competencies as they learn to marry classroom learning with the realities of agency practice (Hanlen, 2011).

There are wide varieties of field work models being practiced in social work around the world. India too has different models of field work practice as the country still doesn't have a unified model of fieldwork and social work education. Generally field work practicum in India consists of observation visits, concurrent visits, and block placements. Concurrent fieldwork is the compulsory component of social work education in India, in which students are sent to an agency or placed in a community. Schools¹ may select the type of agency or site for the field work, based on the nature of course (generic or specialization based), location and other institutional mandates. Most of the Universities and schools follow two day field work procedure in a week as the module for concurrent fieldwork. Open community placement is an Indian model of concurrent field work which is widely practiced by many schools in the country apart from the institutional placement. Open community means a village (in the case of rural areas) or an urban area (preferably backward areas) selected for the purpose of fieldwork. This selection of the open community will be done on the basis of certain criteria and it is different for school to schools, and region to region. Factors such as distance, scope of work, magnitude of social problems, availability of institutions and non-existence of significant threat may be considered. Rural villages are preferred to be the potential locations for student's placement for the concurrent field work as it facilitates the trainee to understand the magnitude of social context, rural problems, possible intervention strategies and working models. Usually a faculty member is allotted with 3-5 students for the supervision. Fieldwork supervisor and students plan and engage positively with the field work activities. The activity and intervention planning is done during the Individual and Group Conferences². Open community

¹ School refers to a Social Work Department/Unit offers courses like MA/MSW or BSW (Bachelors or Master's degree in Social Work). Usually such schools in India function as the Department or unit of Colleges or University.

² Individual Conference and Group Conference (IC & GC) - Individual Conferences are conscious, planned and focused situations for sharing and learning between the supervisor and

placement provides a wide spectrum of avenues for the students to practice with multiple stakeholders and clientele in the real life setting. Twice in a week students engages with the community at least for 16 hours with a pre-planned set of actions.

As a social work educator and field instructor author has experienced and observed significant indications of positive changes in the three levels of group involved in OCP, i.e. students, social work educators and the community. Though many of these changes are qualitative in nature, the attitudinal and perspective changes which happened to educators and students need to be analyzed for wider dissemination and discussion. The preliminary assumption indicates that the communities in which the schools considered for the sites for OCP witnessed considerable alteration in the structure and dynamics; which is even visible in the quantitative aspects. Therefore the paper seeks to answer the following questions. The first question, whether the notion of engagement as a field work trainee in community brings positive outcomes in the enhancement of knowledge and practice base of a student, is true or not? The second question, are the communities really benefiting from the OCP? Third, whether faculties and social work educators develop wisdom or not? Finally how the fieldwork in an open community is different from other modalities of field work, especially the institutional placement. Information was collected from the students, educators, and the open communities of the two schools¹. The selection was done on the basis of preliminary analysis of the interventions undertaken by these schools. It is understood that these schools are involved at field level in a greater magnitude through the activities of open community placement.

Open Community Placement: The Idea, Practice and the Context of India

Open community placement is a widely practiced model of field work in Central and Northern parts of India. Communities are considered as the social laboratory where the students have opportunity to experiment methods and techniques of social work with a diverse population, under the supervision of a social work educator. As the word OCP indicates, students are placed directly in the community with or without any

supervisee. The conferences provide occasions to discuss issues and concerns arising during the course of field work. Group Conferences enable students to undergo a wide range of experiences in a structured and controlled setting. These experiences range from responsibilities involved in presenting, chairing and recording sessions to exposure to a wide range of field work settings where they are not placed for field work (Field Work Manual, DSSW, 2010). Individual conferences occur twice in a week and Group conferences occur monthly once.

¹ Central University of Rajasthan, Ajmer, India and Guru Ghasidas Central University, Bilaspur, India. Central University of Rajasthan located in a village named Bandarsindri which comes under Rajasthan State; the Department of Social Work of this University places their students in 7 different rural communities for concurrent field work. Guru Ghasidas Central University is located in Bilaspur city of Chhattisgarh State. The school of social work of this University too places their students in seven nearby rural and semi-urban communities.

institutional support (most of the time they work independently under the direct supervision of the faculty). This module is different from the agency/institutional placement where an agency supervisor guides the students to undertake the activities which are specific to the interest of the organization or on the basis of curriculum. Open community placement has a wide variety of objectives that extends from the sensitization of students on social issues to strengthening their capability to practice social work with heterogeneous populations and complex situations independently. The placement in open communities enlighten the students with the comprehensive understanding on the context of social work practice; diversity, disadvantages, marginalization, vulnerability, power relations, the lack of access to resources, discriminations, importance of status and roles, strategies for mobilization and utilization of resources. Recognition of these factors is the core of social work practice in a country like India. Most of these factors are generalizable to a greater extent in the entire context of the country and the universe, even though variations in magnitude can be observable from region to region, State to State and country to country. As an academically structured and guided activity, fieldwork in community offers the students to develop the wisdom to analyze these structural and functional issues. Such empirically grounded understanding of the students and their supervisors initiate the application of social work methods and techniques in real life setting, not only for solving the problems but to have an insight on the applicability of the theoretical underpinnings. Open community placement helps the students to understand the social welfare programs and policies on operation and its implementation. It widens the opportunity to work with the basic unit of society, family to the institutions at local, state and national level. The proactive field involvement makes them fit for community organization practice. This has been rightly pointed out by Janki Andharia (2011) as ‘students are not mere ‘observers’ performing mechanical tasks but are simultaneously engaged in analysis and critical reflection. The nature of work envisaged for the student, the tasks performed and the depth of involvement determines the creation of this identity as a community organization practitioner. Field supervisor/faculty members play a vital role in making them understand the process of working with communities and other clientele groups.

Open community placement has the potentiality, if it has taken a serious supervised activity, to mold students with a set of skills and attitude that are an ingredient to work with diverse population on their different needs¹. There is a higher demand for trained manpower for working with the rural issues in India. This necessitates social work profession to engage their young trainees proactively with the rural issues. The trainees placed in open communities closely work with the local institutions, stakeholders and clients. This facilitates them to understand the socio-political structure and systems of the areas/sites of operation. These set of skills and critical understanding is necessary

¹ But here we need to understand that the field work in social work is entirely different from the internship programs in other courses of study, where the objective is to inculcate the skills for performing a particular job. In social work as discussed field work is a conscious activity which aimed to the inculcation of human values along with the practice base for working with diverse section of society.

for social work practice. But many of the developmental organization (NGOs) which hires and employs social workers often complain that they are not in a position to get a resourceful or capable person to meet the career requirement. No doubt, this assumption is not generalizable and depends to a great extent on the individual capability. But social workers who are employed in developmental organization opine that candidates, who hail from Schools where rigorous field work is offered, perform far better from their counterparts in the field.

Overview of Methodology of Practice

As a supervised activity open community placement revolves around number of phases. The initial stage is devoted for understanding the community. Preliminary information will be collected from available sources including primary data, directly from the people. Faculty supervisors guide the student to possibly follow the processes of community organization (CO) in a systematic manner. In the second stage, students try to explore, and prioritize the problems, community faces. At the later stage faculty supervisor guides the students to thoroughly analyze root causes of the problems and develop intervention strategies; it is through the purposeful application of social work methods, techniques and collaborating them with available community and other resources. The application of methods and techniques are employed at different phases of the field work. On the basis of the discussion arises in the IC & GC faculty supervisor assign specific tasks to the students. There are unique activities often assigned for individual student and common tasks for the groups of students placed in a particular community. For example, a student may be asked to work with the school and other might be working with primary health care centre as individual task. As a common task students might be instructed to organize a sensitization campaign on a social problem.

Community placement often brings valuable non-academic outcomes too even though field work is purely an educational activity. The outcome may be materialistic or non-materialistic that reflects on the three stakeholders i.e. community, supervisor and students. This may perplex student and community whether the field work is target oriented or process oriented. There is no doubt that field work activities are process oriented and aims to achieve the broader goals of fieldwork and social work. The targets are set for the conscious and purposeful utilization of available techniques and methods during the process.

Open Community Placement: Reflections on Reciprocity

As discussed, fieldwork in social work education is continues engagement which can be significantly beneficial to the people involved in it.

1. Areas of Practice

The schools analyzed in this study have engaged in a wide spectrum of practices and experiments in the field, which extends from working with mezzo client to macro clients. The very decision of area of practice is purely based on the magnitude of social

problem of the community and the requirement of the curriculum. It is evident from the open community placement of the schools that, the initial phase of the field work is devoted for working with individuals and families. According to John (name changed), a faculty supervisor *'initially we emphasize the students to establish a positive working rapport with the people and understand the dynamics of the community'* he added that this enables the student to understand the basics of community profiling and social analysis.

The open community fieldwork has different dimensions of practice. The first approach focuses on the practice of method where the primary and secondary methods of social work are practiced. Each student is encouraged to undertake a specific assignment on each of the methods such as conducting case work and group work, community organization, social action and social work research. Students are asked to work closely with government institutions and non-governmental organizations in order to create awareness of the practice of social welfare administration. Another approach is to focus on the demographic dividends of the population where students are supposed to work with children, youth, men, women, aged and people with special needs. The schools have active working structure with youth, adolescence, schools, local self-institutions and health delivery systems. Specific issues such as sanitation, water, health, school dropout, gender discrimination, alcoholism have given significant place in the practice module. These problems are almost similarly ubiquitous in the breadth and width of the country and even in other developing world. Students in open community placement are professionally trained to work with varied issues and diverse groups in a given time. Their engagement with the community is proactive and non-political in nature.

2. Field Engagement: New Insights

Continues engagement with the people and community brought insight into faculties and students on the areas and modes of practice. The open community was academically used as a potential social laboratory for the practice and application. The practice has widened the attitudes and brought new insight for students and faculties in the areas of research and practice. Many of the unexplored areas of research are taken into consideration and have started empirical investigations.

Proactive engagement in the field enables many students to accumulate and inculcate the humanistic values into their personality. Being a person from dominated caste, Mr. Ram (name changed) had prejudiced attitude towards other castes, but his engagement with the community has significantly changed his attitude and started social intercourse with the lower caste people in the community. Mr. Ram was categorically worked with the people in the lower strata of the society and his interventions brought significant results in the empowerment of this community. In a caste oriented rural society working with lower strata is still considered as a stigma. These realities of rural life brought into the life of students and faculties, such sensitizations are necessary for the social work practice in a country like India. One faculty from a school said that....

'The field work supervision and interactions with rural communities during supervision in the field changed my understanding on the rural realities which I

had perceived with different orientation'. He further emphasized that 'in open community placement a faculty supervisor have to perform an additional duty of an agency supervisor, this enables the educator to have practice base, this is important because many of the social work educators are in their current employment without having any base on field based practice'.

This is very true in the case of many young educators and the open community placement is a venue where the educator have much freedom on designing and implementing interventions while comparing to the agency placement.

3. Development of Practice Base

A number of interviews were conducted among the alumnus of the two schools who have undergone open community placement and are in social work practice. Majority of the alumnus of both schools are in direct social work practice. They were asked to respond how their practice base is grounded with the open community placement they underwent. Interviewees had different observations and diverse perceptions on open community placement. The common ground in their perception was many component of the OCP is ingredient in their current practice of Social Work. Trainees working knowledge established during the field work is significantly utilizable in their current employment requirement where social work is practiced.

Ms. Neena (name changed) is working with Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) in a Non-Governmental Organization opined that:

'The interventions that I have engaged now is almost similar to the field work I have done during my masters, at that point of time we (me and my co-workers) were mobilized women (even it was difficult to mobilize women in such a community) and formed an SHG. I am privileged to indicate that still that SHG is functional'.

Social Workers currently engaged in practice and who have undergone open community placement is enough confident and capable to work with the complex rural community set ups which usually creates significant challenges in the practice.

Open community placement provides prospects for social work trainees to develop potential skills in rapport building and establishing working relationship with clients and stakeholders. Working in a rural community or urban slum without an agency support is a difficult task, as people hesitate to cooperate and doubtful to give information. Students who are placed in open community usually overcome this challenge by continuous efforts and by conveying their purpose to people i.e. learning. People usually incorporate when they come to know they are not going to benefit materially for their time and cooperation. But trainees overcome these issues and mobilize the community in due course of time.

Mr. Sudhir (name changed) an alumnus of Central University of Rajasthan working in a University project involving in the mobilization of community people on water issues said that:

I am hailing from a rural community of the same region and I was very familiar with the culture and social structure but through open community placement I developed the skill of having focused observation to the social phenomena by connecting with the theoretical base’.

Understanding the caste and local dynamics is a necessity for working with the communities because these are the factors that could act as significant determinants for outcomes of any interventions.

Reena (name changed), an alumni from Guru Ghasidas Central University, said that:

I am working with vulnerable children and my current practices are somewhat similar to those of the interventions we have done with the children through child clubs during open community placement’.

Many of the interviewed practitioners reiterated the same. One practitioner who is working with a tribal community said that:

My capacity of working with communities has developed during the open community placement; I could not be in this practice and help these people if I would have sent only for agency placement’. Further he opined ‘I think agency placement often ends in contradiction and confusion, as the agency supervisor is most of the time a non-professional, their guidance rarely suits with the framework of theoretical underpinnings and in most of the cases they just entertain the social work trainees for the sake of doing it’.

A social work trainee currently pursuing Masters and recently finished open community placement pointed that:

Community placement is a very noteworthy component which can create a series of advantages to the trainees and I personally experienced that one of my coworker, she was so shy and introvert became such a wonderful community organizer by the end of her community placement. I strongly believe that community placement has the potential to bring leadership qualities to upcoming social work trainees’.

Fresh Graduates have positive opinion on open community placement under the given criteria of the proactive engagement and guidance from the supervisor.

4. University Community Engagement

Open community placement plays significant role in creating reciprocal relationship between University and community. University Community engagement is a multidimensional umbrella term that describes collaboration between the University and a community for the mutual beneficial exchange of resources and knowledge (Escrigas et al., 2014). As seen in the earlier part of this paper, students and practitioners empower themselves in the practice base; the case of communities are also not different as the sites of open community placement (villages in these cases) has significantly benefited from placement of students. The advantages which the community had can be categorized as material and non-material. As a supervisor for the open community placement the author had experienced certain constructive changes in the community and which was reiterated by people in the community. It is noteworthy that open community placement could bring such changes in the areas of practice even though it is a non-political and sponsored programme which doesn't have any mode of financial support. The activities undertaken during the field work include mezzo to macro level activities. Most of the villages wherein the schools placed their

students are interior areas, in which most of the features of typical rurality are prevalent. The intervention of government or non- governmental sector is minimal in the locality and the existences of social problems are devastating. This has provided greater scope for practice and at the same time, it created considerable challenges for practice.

A set of interventions were undertaken in the field work villages by the students with the participation of villagers. Social Work students placed in each village prepared comprehensive community profile and did need identification. Based on the identified needs, each student trainee prepared their plan of intervention that comes in the purview of social work. Existence of social problems was almost similar in the villages where schools placed their students. But each community has peculiar needs and dissimilar magnitudes problems.

One of the crucial issues identified and intervention made was on sanitation. Rural Rajasthan accounts voluminous practices of open defecation and mismanagement of waste water. A series of sensitization programs were conducted to promote the construction and usage of toilet. A number of households came forward for constructing toilet with and without the support of government schemes. Another initiative was soak pit construction. Soak Pit is a simple indigenous technology which has a countless benefits on water and sanitation. Rural areas of India have very poor system of household waste water management. This waste water usually runs through streets, and forms puddles here and there. Soak pits that work on the simple principle of filtration. It consists of a circular pit of about one diameter width and one meter depth. It is filled with filter materials which are easily available pebbles, sand and brickbats. The wastewater from the kitchen and bathroom is directed into these soak pits through a pipeline. This pit enables and ensures the surrounding is cleaned, which reduces the risks for epidemic and recharges the ground water. The intervention yielded significant results in the cleanliness of the villages. Apart from the material benefit, a large number of villagers were motivated for healthy sanitation practices. Around 80 soak pits were constructed and most of them are successfully functioning. The construction was facilitated by the students with the active support of villagers.

Another area of intervention was establishment of community Libraries. Educational backwardness is a felt problem in these communities. The status of adult learning is also poor. The habit of reading and spirit of inquisitiveness are lacking, these leads to the intergenerational transfer of social problems. Libraries are expected to serve as the centre of learning and debates. Four community libraries are established and that are playing significant role in inculcating the habit of reading and spirit of enquiry among rural students.

Mr. Nandalal (Name changed), one of the community member said that:

'Students from the University regularly come here, they always find time to interact with the villagers and due to their effort a library was established in our village. Children are showing interest in reading the books and spent time in library; this is very new experience for our village'.

Social work trainees practice with different groups yielded significant impacts in the communities. Trainees are established youth clubs in all the sites (villages) of open community placement. These youth clubs are engaged in the voluntary activities with

the aim of village development. The dedication and engagement of the youth was being utilized at different village level activities. Trainees are trying to link the youth with different government schemes and make them accessible to career opportunities by providing career guidance. Another demographic segment social work trainees closely work with is children. All the villages have a children club where promotional and recreational activities are regularly organized. Adolescence girls group is another initiative. This group serves as a forum for sharing the concerns and problems of girls. They are being motivated to study further and empowered to stand for their own rights. The activities of girls group is relevant for a country like India where girls/women are being discriminated at every stages and aspects of their day to day life. As a result few girls were motivated and joined the University courses from those open community villages.

Both the Social Work Schools have continuously organizing sensitization campaigns at the village level. Rallies, street plays and other forms of public sensitization campaigns are organized throughout the year with the objective of prevention and promotion. Such campaigns resulted better in the university community engagement.

Working with school is a major agenda for the social work trainees. As indicated earlier, educational backwardness is a serious problem in the rural villages, the same was contributed by many factors starting from the school infrastructure, lack of human resources, lowered student attendance ratio, school dropout and low learning outcomes. Interventions of trainees have focus on these issues. Every field work day students visit the school and interacts with the teachers and students. They teach value education to children and engage them in voluntary social service activities such as tree plantation and cleanliness drives. Recreational components are also planned and implemented to make learning more enjoyable. Activities like these are important for schools where such initiatives are not implemented. Mr. Kishore (name changed), an elementary school teacher where trainees involved in school social work stated that:

'Students from the University mobilized youth of the village and initiated the renovation of the school playground which was not in use for many years, now the students are playing in the ground and after the school hours same is used by the youth'.

Another teacher said that:

'Students of the University always conduct group activities with our students and they enjoy those activities, one of the notable things they have conducted is the sensitization on hygienic practices, it has resulted positively. Students are being motivated to come regularly to school and their involvement in voluntary activities like tree plantation and cleanliness drive is promising'

Ms. Jyoti (name changed), alumni of Guru Ghasidas Central University considered that:

'During our field work we actively worked with schools, we found lot of issues and one of the devastating was school dropout. A number of children drop out even before completing their elementary education and there was no initiatives from schools authorities to get them readmitted, we are reported the same to our supervisor. He suggested why don't you go and meet the parents of students? Then we have collected the details of dropped out students from school and approached one by one. The reasons for school dropouts were not that complex and we found that most of them are

in a position to continue their studies. Main reason was the apathy of parents; they just were allowing them to stay back if their children do not show interest to go school. We have counseled the children and parents through many home visits. At the end of episode we could brought back 6 children to school and still 5 among them are in school'.

Students were guided for the purposeful utilization of community resources and mapping the indigenous techniques to solve the problems that exists in the communities. The scientific and skill based approach resulted positively in tangible and measurable outcomes in the community.

Conclusions

Open community placement and subsequent interventions have definitely created a momentum of change in the community and created practice base for students. This is quite evident from the current analysis as involved agents of the field work practicum i.e. students, faculty and community had vital insight. Open community placement has significant implications for social work profession and education. It has a potential for initiating and enhancing university community engagement, such engagement is imperative role in ensuring sustainable development.

Some senior academicians criticize the open community placement by saying that it is not just the result of pure intention of training students in community setting. They argue that some social work schools are being compelled to send students as they are unable to find an agency having trained social worker or a professional who could guide the students in the perspective of social work education and practice. Especially Social Work Schools located in rural areas face this problem as it is difficult for them to find appropriate agencies. It is evident from the current analysis that the quality of open community training is largely depended upon the input they get from the school and particularly from the faculty supervisor. Unfortunately many of the time such quality concerns are missing from the scene. It is understood from the analysis that sending students to an agency without having a skilled professional social worker as a supervisor is worthless and such experience is far behind than those from the OCP.

The conclusions from the study are not generalizable as the reciprocity of open community placement is always subject to the kind of training, quality of human resources involved and the areas of practice. The proactive involvement of faculty supervisors, nature and cooperation of community is also significant determinant that affect the reciprocity.

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ENGAGING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF AN INFORMAL QUAKER MOVEMENT IN KENYA

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***Abstract:** In a society that is composed of both secular and religious groups, religious activities or presence often cause tension. A study of religious activities in Kenya shows the church viewed as a force for development on one hand and as detrimental to development on the other. A more tolerant society requires re-examination of religious activities from different contextual perspectives. This study explores an informal Quaker movement's engagement with the Maasai community in community development. The findings of the study suggest that religious groups are organic hence they adapt to environmental changes that characterize their ecology. Organizational adaptation to the environment is a process in which organizations transact values with the society based on mutual interests and benefits. To effect value transaction, they employ techniques available within their environment in order to thrive against forces that tend to disadvantage them or threaten their existence.*

***Keywords:** Indigenous community; development; Quakers; Kenya.*

1. Introduction

The role of faith communities and religious groups in development is dominated by two perspectives namely: (1) faith communities are agents of, or actors in development. This view is drawn from the historical work of churches and mission movements in promoting access to basic needs around the world. It has been in the recent past reinforced by World Bank reports which recognize faith communities as critical to the development process. (2) Faith communities are anti-nationalists or setbacks in development. This view is derived from historical studies that criticize the role of missionaries in independence movements as collaborators with the colonial system.

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Faith communities as anti-nationalists or setbacks in development

Missionaries played a crucial role in colonial development. It is important to note that different missionary organizations in Kenya had different polity based on which they engaged the colonial government. Some missionary agencies were actively involved in discussing the transformation of Africa. As a result, they differed with African societies on some issues. In such cases, they were seen as supporting colonial government policies. There were also essential issues that brought missionary agencies into collaboration with the colonial government for instance; at the time, missionary organizations were dominantly white and relied on government support in matters such as security. They supported government policies they deemed positive for development and were also involved in shaping welfare policies since they owned the largest share of the education and health sector (Christopher, 2013). It is this complex relationship from which the idea that missionaries were collaborators with colonialists is embedded. The ties of the missionary agencies to the colonial government were such that Kenya's independence was also interpreted to mean the independence of the church (Smuck, 2005). After 1963, there was a gradual transition of power and agenda from missionary agencies to African churches.

Some critics also view missionaries as co-imperialists with the colonial government. This view is based on the idea that both the colonial government and missionary agencies had policies that intended to change African values. This school of thought holds that the education curriculum in missionary schools imposed Christian values on the local people who wanted to maintain their own way of life (Maura, 2005). The early missionaries settled where the White settlers had settled in Africa. As a result, missions existed as somehow exclusive communities within the larger African communities. Because of the hostility and resentment local people had for the colonial government as a result of among other things mass displacement of local people, missionaries just like early Christian converts were viewed as traitors (Karanja, 2009).

Missionaries were also viewed as beneficiaries of the colonial system at the expense of Africa's development. Some historians uphold the view that Africa was evangelized by colonial instruments of power. As a result, Christianity became the religion of civilization and instrument of modernization. This view holds that Christian missionaries were involved in trade with colonialists hence they were a spiritual wing of the secular imperialism (Ekon, 2014). This view is much stronger in areas where local communities lost their land to colonial occupation some of which was allocated to missionaries by colonial government either free or through some business transactions.

Faith communities as agents of or actors in development

The church plays a significant role in development. Even though the church as a people of faith or an institution has engaged in matters of social justice for centuries; it is until a few decades ago that the concept of faith based development was popularized by World Bank. Studies on faith based development largely focused on the role of faith communities and religious institutions in development (Mawdsley & Rigg, 2003). While there has been an emphasis on the separation of the church and the state in some western countries; churches because of their power to mobilize their followers along

issues of interests, official statements which they make on matters of public concern, and their coherency to form a persistent movement towards issues of public affairs continue not only to shape public policy; but also to participate actively in the public policy making process as interest groups (Fink, 2009).

In South Africa, the church has been a strong and vibrant movement championing a wide range of justice issues since the apartheid era (Simpson, 2015). Powell and Robbins (2015)'s study on mental health, religion and culture in Australia shows that people utilize their spirituality as resources in work engagement. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between faith and mental wellbeing. Furthermore, church attendants are likely to volunteer. Moris (2010)'s study of the church as an alternative for the disabled suggests that if the church can transform itself, it can be a place where every person is valued and treated with all their uniqueness equally. It can be a place where even those who appear weak and most vulnerable are not excluded, oppressed, or marginalized.

The church as a faith community shapes the beliefs, values and experiences of the members of that community. The study of faith based organizations in Nigeria indicates that faith based organizations provide social services in areas where the government is either unable to, or has failed to. In doing so, their religious nature is a major influence (Olarinmoye, 2012). At the heart of faith based organizations are the values, beliefs and initiative to go beyond one's own boundaries, and improve the material well-being of those who need intervention (Clarke, 2015). Faith based organizations in the US for example have played a major role in providing welfare services in the country as well as relief and emergency assistance abroad. In doing so, they emphasize both the moral and political role they play (Cooper, 2014). Faith communities provide a rich culture that enables the members of that particular community make spiritual sense of the daily life experiences (Gregory et.al., 2012). They build sense of community by providing social, recreational, and education resources, especially when the community cannot afford these resources (Ekon, 2014). Faith communities also promote good behavior for instance tobacco use prevention and health living (Reinert, et.al., 2003).

The ministry of the church in society is driven by the ethic of care. There is a strong tradition in the church and among faith communities to intervene in the problems facing the other. It is a tradition rooted in emulating the life of Jesus in the gospels, as well as the commitment of the early church. It emphasizes self-sacrifice and self-giving for the well-being of the disadvantaged other (Kean, 2003).

Public expectations demands that the church stand for what is ethical. The legacy of the traditional church and the challenges within which the contemporary church finds itself suggest that the church still holds a relevant role in social transformation. Tannehill (2012) drawing from authority of the Biblical books of Acts and Luke observes that the church has an ethical responsibility to witness, preach, teach and lead. It is a moral and spiritual responsibility on the side of the church to set an example of what it means to stand for and live an ethical life. This implies that church leaders mirrored by the symbol of discipleship and apostleship face public expectations to live an exemplary

life, to provide direction to believers, and to shed light on what the church and the gospel stands for in a time of crisis.

The priest, pastor, or church elders play an important role in a faith community, especially in socializing the members of that community into values, beliefs, and tradition that shape the way these individuals view the world, as well as behave (Walker, 2014). For church leaders to be effective, they need effective training. Effective training should take into account the quality of the training (Lincoln, 2002). This means that trained leaders will not only have the capacity to perform functions; but will also have the capacity to understand complex ethical issues that arise in ministry. The ability of church leaders to understand complex issues in society is paramount to their ability to know when and how to provide necessary intervention in both church and public ministry.

Some statistical evidences of faith in development

Studies in the previous sections focused on the analysis of two dominant views that: (1) faith communities are agents of, or actors in development; and (2) faith communities are anti-nationalists or setbacks in development. These views are derived from an analysis of historical studies, religious studies, well as the interpretation of cases in various development experiences. This section however is concerned with the review of literature about statistical studies seeking to measure the effect, contribution, or influence of religion and spirituality on development. The limitation of empirical studies in this section is that statistical studies linking religion to development in Kenya are scarce. As a result, empirical studies in this section constitute a blend of studies on Kenya as well as other regions in the world. The reason for doing so is that as a matter of shared belief system; Kenyan Christianity is dominantly a derivative of western denominations. Therefore, these studies indicate that religion or spirituality contributes to; or has influence on development.

In America, 79% of religious progressives believed that being religious is about doing the right thing. On the other hand 82% of religious conservatives believed that if enough people had a personal relationship with God, social problems would take care of themselves (Jones, et.al. 2013). Similarly, The Kenya Youth Survey Report shows that faith is the most cherished value among the youth in Kenya (85%) ranking above family and work (The East African Institute, 2016). This is an indication that religion assumes priority among other personal values the youth subscribe to in Kenya.

These views emphasize the idea of defining faith in terms of action. The idea of defining faith in terms of action goes beyond the belief system and takes into account things people do as a result of what they believe in. In Côte d'Ivoire for instance, faith groups including Roman Catholic parishes and charismatic movements provided shelter in 35 sites to refugees fleeing the 2011 political crisis. This was in response to the refugee crisis that had affected over 20,000 people (UNHCR, 2014).

Religion can also be seen as a structural or social condition that inhibits the socio-economic and political system. Religion for example determines access to employment opportunities especially for women in Kenya. A study by De Giusti and Kambhampati

(2016) shows that protestant religion was a determinant of women's employment (0.028*). The study also indicated that protestant women were likely to be employed than Catholic and Muslim women. This is because of religious influence for such as the use of religion to justify attitudes and norms that inhibit socio-economic structures upon which employment and economic opportunities are anchored.

From these studies; one can infer the following: (1) religion remains a source of motivation or inspiration for development action among religious communities; (2) drawing from their own faith; religious communities are actively engaged in development work across the world; (3) majority of Kenyan youth highly value religion and participate in religious activities.

While these studies cannot serve as the basis for disputing the historical view that faith communities are set-backs in development, they show that: (1) people continue to find value and meaning in religions; and (2) people find their religious experiences a reason for doing something good to the society or those in need. Unlike the traditional view of religion which portrays religious groups as missionary in nature, motivated to expand and conquer; there is another dimension to religious groups. This dimension portrays religion as a need-based entity just like a hospital. You don't need it always but someone may need it at some point. This dimension does not change the reality of the traditional view that religion may be missionary but rather adds voice to the idea that religious groups and interventions are not always driven by the motive to conquer and expand. On the contrary, faith communities seek to co-exist and adapt to changes as they respond to different experiences.

Quakers and development in Kenya

Quakers have their unique history and characteristics in the development literature. The first Quaker movement originated from English reformation. George Fox (1624-1691), the father of Quaker faith emphasized Quaker testimonies such as equality, honesty, integrity and peace as core to Quaker way of life. The Quaker doctrine of inner light emphasizes that there is that of God in every person. Quaker missionaries arrived in Western Kenya in 1902. They were from the American Quaker tradition. They had a four tier strategy namely: evangelizing local communities; building schools to promote education; building hospitals to promote health care; and initiating income generating projects to improve the livelihoods of the local people. While at the beginning the Quaker mission was initiated by American Quakers; the development and spread of Quaker way of life, faith, and initiatives were carried out by Kenyan Quaker converts with support from American Quakers. However, Quakers did not collaborate closely with the colonial government and had difficulties penetrating in African communities that held strong values such as polygamy, patriarchy, drinking alcohol (Kakaya, 1980).

In Kenya, Quakers have preferred mediation with stakeholders rather than leading or participating in open political confrontational movements, or engaging in direct legal engagement in pursuit of settling public disputes. This is in line with the Quaker pacifist tradition (Haitch & Miller, 2006). Quakers firmly hold anti-religious religions view of faith for instance protesting formal church structures and rituals used in worship for example images. Quakers often strive to maintain still and silent way of worship or

expressing faith (Coleman & Collins, 2000). Since the colonial period Quakers have maintained silent church state relations. Unlike other churches which for instance make press statements on critical national issues, Quakers rarely do so or join such coalitions. Therefore, their visibility in Kenya's political space is rare.

Since 1902, the work of Quakers in Kenya has focused on promoting equality through community empowerment for instance building of mission hospitals and schools, engaging in peace building, and providing relief in times of crisis. Rural Service Program for example which began in 1902 as Africa industrial mission provides health care, education, and infrastructure along with evangelism (Moyer, 2015). Quaker programs focus on providing alternative to government welfare policies. In their advocacy, Quaker organizations maintain minimal direct engagement with government on issues of policy in favor of providing services to marginalized communities. Until 1970s Quaker initiatives were concentrated in western Kenya, where they have built 515 primary schools, over 200 high schools, two technical colleges, and three hospitals (Musonga, 2014). In 1970s, Quakers moved to Northern Kenya where they built their first mission center in Turkana, and later expanded to Samburu in 1990s (Friends United Meeting, 2012). By the year 2015, Quakers had established 240 secondary schools in Kenya (Hockett, 2012).

Quakers highly esteem the phrase "Let your life speak." It is phrase they attributed to George Fox the founder of the Quaker Movement and is interpreted to mean that faith is much a reflection of what people do rather than what they confess. In this case Quakers cherish values such as peace, equality, simplicity, community, and stewardship (Pierson, 2011). While Christianity has its own religious limitations as regards gender equality for instance; the idea of a faith based on the inner experience of Christ (also known as "that of God in every person" or "inner light") allowed women to perform functions that were traditionally reserved for men. This created lanes of freedom from which African women were empowered through access to education and freedom of expression (McMahon, 2016). In 2007 Quakers developed a peace and conflict resolution curriculum for high school students in response to Kenya's 2007/8 post election violence. This is in line with Quaker mission to promote peace and conflict resolution around the world (Hockett, 2012).

Since 1930s, Quaker organizations have used the following approaches to engage in community development. (1) Focus on reduction of inequalities in a wide range of areas including gender and socio-economic inequalities, income inequalities in rural sector, and provision of basic education and health; (2) Promoting community participation and inclusion in the development process; (3) Fostering the principles of equality by creating an environment where members of the community join the development process as partners in development.

The freedom within the Quaker community allows for diverse development processes for example: (1) The church as a development actor engages in development using church structures, resources, and agenda as instruments of delivering development outcomes. An example of this is the current Quaker mission schools and hospitals. (2) International Quaker mission organizations partner with local churches around the world in realizing development projects for example the work of Friends United

Meeting in the United States. (3) A group of Quakers in a local congregation form a movement to engage in development process and work with Quaker churches as partners. While many inferences on the relationship between church and development have been drawn from larger development impacts of the work of church organizations; there are limited actual studies that systematically documents and analyzes what actually happens when informal Quaker movements engages in development, how the movement works, and what development lessons can be drawn from this development experience.

2. Methodology

The Context

By late 1800s, African leadership had resisted the penetration of missionary activities in Kenya. This was fueled by among other things lack of trust in the colonial administration and the fear of losing land (Omwami, 2014). This explains the earlier reaction of the Maasai community towards Christianity which has been described as hostile. Some studies indicate that some of the Maasai were evicted and displaced by the colonial government from their lands in order to pave way for European settlements between 1905 and 1911, a few years before the outbreak of WWI (Duder & Simpson, 1997). It is estimated that the Maasai lost 50 % of their land to what later became Kenya. For over 100 years, the Maasai still struggle with the legacies of eviction and displacement, some of which have often culminated into cycles of post-election violence (Hughes, 2000). Today, the Maasai inhabit the versatile southern Kenya region along Kenya Tanzania border without land tenure. They are part of indigenous communities that resisted colonialism and Christianization for decades. Their resilience against modernization and Christianization has in the modern literature been interpreted as a model to preserve cultural values. The Maasai are largely a pastoralist community that holds firmly, values such as communal land ownership, customary authority that regulates everyday life including use of natural resources, and reciprocity (Seno & Shaw, 2002). There are a lot of positive things about this for instance, such resilience serve to assert the significance for respecting other people's values and way of life. This is one of the universal rights and norms (Hodgson, 2011).

Much of the land inhabited by the Maasai is dry Savanna, a semi arid region with limited infrastructure and economic opportunities outside livestock keeping. As a result, majority of the local people rely on informal economic activities such as charcoal burning and seasonal agriculture (Rucina, et.al. 2010). It is also important to note that indigenous communities like the Maasai are the most marginalized communities in Kenya. This is partly because during colonialism, the welfare system, especially education and health care were provided by Christian missions since the colonial government did not adequately invest in these (Moyer, 2015).

In post-independence Kenya, there have been little resources allocated to reduce inequalities among the marginalized communities. By the year 2011, Kenya was rated one of the most unequal countries in the world with vast regional inequalities and imbalanced wealth distribution (Kwaka & Mutunga, 2011). For indigenous marginalized

communities, the first clear national initiative towards empowerment was the 2010 new constitution which provided for the rights of the minorities. The constitution in Article 27 (4) recognizes marginalization on account of historical injustices or present structural conditions. Likewise, Article 56 provides for the state to address issues affecting marginalized people (Republic of Kenya, 2010).

Theoretical framework

This study was located within two dominant narratives, one that saw the role of the church in development as retrogressive and the one that saw the role of the church in development as progressive. The focus was to identify a shift from the dominant narrative and gather ideas one can use to construct the alternative narrative/view. As a result, this study examines the Quaker movement and interprets its activities through the lens of organizational ecology theory. Organizational ecology theory assumes that organizations are organic hence they are affected by the environment within which they exist. This environment changes from time to time hence imposing pressure on these organizations. Therefore, if they don't change to fit the new environment, they will die. Therefore, organizations respond to the external environment by making adjustments that enable them to survive or thrive in the changing environment (Su, 2009).

The since devolution of national resources under the new constitutional dispensation still remains an infancy level; and because of the wide gap in inequalities across regions and communities; the church as part of civil society still plays a significant role in reduction of inequalities by engaging in development projects that are of mutual benefits to the church and the community. Church movements are still inclined to the early protestant ethical view that they work to please God, and to demonstrate their worth to themselves as members of their faith community (Edgell, 2012). In return, the community engages the church in development initiatives out of need to benefit from what it perceives as: functional values for example the desired lifestyle; spiritual resources such as hope, faith, emotional relief; and material or infrastructural resources which can give the respective community a competitive advantage in a world where that particular community has been left behind, as a result of historical marginalization. This type of mutual interaction benefits both sides and is relatively different from colonialism or imperialism. It is along this line of interaction that this study seeks to examine what actually happened when an informal Quaker movement engaged the Maasai community in community development.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is a qualitative methodology that emphasizes what brings life for example health, vitality, well-being and excellence. Appreciative Inquiry seeks to honor the past and review the present in order to positively reconstruct the future. It seeks to bring in new perspectives that offer alternative conceptions of knowledge, new discourse on human potential and new directions into achieving an alternative end (Somerville & Farner, 2012).

Appreciative Inquiry assumes that: (1) reality is socially constructed; (2) inquiry is an intervention that changes participants; (3) the questions the researcher asks contains change effect because they influence what participants will think, say, and imagine about the future; (4) organizational life is expressed in stories members share and is always reconstructed through conversations; (5) use words that invoke life or positive emotional energy in participants and inspires people is essential. When you ask positive changes; you make participants envision even greater possibilities and energy (Bushe & Kassam, 2005 in Somerville & Farner, 2012, p.11).

The following four-Cycle approach is used in the study: (1) Discovery; (2) Dreaming; (3) Design; (4) Destiny. This approach assumes that Appreciative Inquiry focuses on: (1) what is positive; (2) gathering knowledge that is applicable to the situation; (3) creating new ideas/knowledge; (4) using images that compel and provoke participants to action (Bushe & Kassam, 2005 in Somerville & Farner, 2012, p.11).

Participants in the study were members of an informal Quaker movement that came together in 2010 with a vision to plant a mission station among the Maasai of Kenya. The station would serve as a community development center providing community services as well as act as a center for Quaker worship, faith and practice. A collection of event narratives and interview techniques were used to collect data from participants.

3. Findings of the Study

(1) Discovery

The purpose of the discovery section was to appreciate the past and present situation. Therefore, the researcher collected from participants, stories about their past experiences. Inquiries were made regarding the following issues: participants' lived experiences and background; the value they brought to movement; their hopes and dreams; and their memories of the last event when they came together to address an issue or issues of common concern. The findings of this section show that participants were of the second and third generation of Kenyan Quakers. They grew up in Quaker families. They lived in communities and attended Quaker schools. They brought into the movement a cohesive force of Quaker values. A part from the Quaker heritage which they shared, they were largely a post-independence generation (born after 1960s), a people who grew up when mobilizing community resources for community development was dominantly a national value. This value locally known as *Harambee* (meaning pulling resources and efforts together) defined Kenya's patriotism for over five decades. From churches to community schools and hospitals, political leaders, religious leaders, and the community mobilized resources to develop infrastructure. The idea was based on the notion that the state alone did not have enough resources to build the nation; hence the state was a development partner in every community. Most of them had been involved in more than one community event in which they mobilized resources or participated in the actual volunteer work on community projects.

Participants were also responding to religious awakening in the city. About a decade before the movement formed, national mainstream media ran shows in which

Pentecostal and evangelical preachers reached out to viewers and listeners across the nation. They taught among other things individual initiative to reach out to others and share the gospel. They highlighted community projects they were engaging in as well. During weekends, they held open air gatherings where they preached the gospel. Gradually, people in mainstream Christianity began to demand a more proactive community engagement. While these were not new teachings and practices to Quakers, they were awakening. Besides Pentecostalism, the expansion of Islam had reached in places that it had not been before. Many villages and sub-urban areas that did not have mosques before had several. Early morning Muslim prayers woke up people in urban centers. These changes induced in young people a sense of response. Some young people left local Quaker congregations to join them. Others began the discussion about remaining Quaker and doing something of their own in response. In a way, pressure from Pentecostal movements and Islam provoked an inner awakening among Quaker congregations. When the need to reach out to the community arose, many found resonance with the call to join the movement.

(2) Dreaming

The mission to plant a Quaker mission center among the Maasai of Kenya was informed by a range of factors and negotiated through informal networks over time. In January 2007, a Quaker elder from Nairobi who worked for a seed company had been transferred by the company to Loitoktok District. Loitoktok is located down the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro, about 25 kilometers from Kenya Tanzania border. The region is a semi-arid area. Because of the vulnerability of the region to drought and famine, international organizations like USAID work with government on community development projects such as agriculture and health. This intervention stimulates the rural economy of the area prompting private sector firms to establish branches in the area selling products such as seeds and agricultural inputs to farmers. To a large extent, much of development financing in the region comes from non-governmental and civil society sector.

For about four years, the elder frequently sent letters to the church in Nairobi inviting Quakers to establish a mission station in Loitoktok. These letters were read in local congregations as part of public communication sessions. In October 2010, a group of youth who had attended a youth conference approached local church leaders who were standing outside the church. One of them asked: Why can't we go to Loitoktok and establish a mission there? The conversation grew spontaneously among those who were standing by. Local leaders adopted the idea. They encouraged the youth to take it up as a youth initiative. On 27th of October 2010, two youth leaders volunteered to travel to Loitoktok. The following day, they travelled to Kisanjani, a rural area about twelve kilometers from Loitoktok town. They surveyed the area and upon return, they submitted a report to the Young Friends Program Office. Kisanjani was a scarcely populated rural semi-arid area. One catholic mission had been established in the area. It ran the only community school in the area.

(3) Design

On 4th of December 2010, Young Friends Program Office facilitated the formation of the Mission Loitoktok Committee to organize for the mission to establish a mission station in Loitoktok. It comprised of youth leaders and other members of the Quaker congregation who felt the urge to join the movement. This committee focused mainly on the mission event planning. As a result it held consultations with: (1) individuals and other local Quaker congregations in Nairobi who donated resources used in the mission and provided volunteers teams; (2) local police in Loitoktok who provided security; (3) passenger service companies that transported volunteer teams and resources used in the mission; (4) a hotel enterprise that provided lodging for volunteer teams; and (5) members of the local community in Kisanjani who were intended to host the mission. The committee also organized the following mission events: (1) public relations; (2) humanitarian relief services; (3) church community consultative forum; and (4) preaching of the gospel. Public relations activities involved community engagement to introduce Quakers to the host community. It focused on sharing with members of the community who Quakers are, their values, and beliefs. Church community consultative forum involved a series of meetings between the local community and volunteer teams in which the following issues were discussed: (1) What will be the role of the church in the community? (2) Who among the community would be interested in joining the Quaker community? (3) In what ways would the Quakers be involved in the life of the community in the future? Preaching the gospel was basically talking about belief in Jesus Christ as the transforming power and ultimate reason behind the Quaker way of life. The committee raised funds and material needs from well-wishers. It also conducted a fundraising on 6th of March, 2011 where local churches and individuals contributed to the mission. Finally, the mission was conducted from 10th to 13th March 2011. About thirty two youth took part in the mission.

(4) Destiny

The movement organized rallies, conducted road shows, and distributed leaflets through community leaders, inviting members of the community to its events. Some volunteer teams provided humanitarian relief to the community. Others interacted with members of the community creating new friendships, while others engaged in church-community consultative forum. Worship services were conducted twice on the evening of 12th March, 2011 and on the morning of 13th March, 2011. Twenty three members of the community joined the Quaker movement. Through the consultative forum, a local building was hired to provide initial services for the Quaker mission center. The movement however faced the following challenges:

1. There were Limited finances which led to limited work and charitable services.
2. Since many local people were illiterate, most of the participants preferred use of their native language. This prompted for the constant need for translation services which were hard to find.
3. There was need for more time to discuss church-community engagement.

4. Volunteers lived twelve kilometers away from the mission field due to lack of facilities and security in the area. This limited the amount of working hours.
5. Humanitarian work was overwhelmingly more than the volunteers who had come to serve the community.
6. Humanitarian relief was not adequate for the community

Following this experience, a series of follow up meetings were conducted with the members of the community to assess the community needs and ways in which Quaker movements would assist. As a result of the community engagement, the local community offered the Quaker mission Centre community land to build a mission Centre, a school, and a hospital.

On 6th Jan 2014, Quakers started a Nursery School at the mission center. About 35 students were enrolled. This was much more than the number that had been anticipated during the initial planning since there was no data on the children in the community. A Voluntary Teacher from the community offered to teach the children. In the initial report on the opening of the nursery, the chair of the nursery school committee wrote:

It is a challenge to support her (volunteer teacher) in order for her to continue doing the work. I request well-wishers to come out and support the nursery school in whichever way. We have started a feeding program for these little children. We depend on members to contribute food for the children. I therefore invite you to be in this group contributing to the feeding program.

In response, well-wishers raised funds through the nursery school committee. By December 2015, the school had provided free nursery education to over 70 children and community support services to more than 150 families. By early 2016, an elementary community school had begun.

4. Implications for Practice

This study has shown that the Maasai community in Kenya is a typical example of indigenous communities that remain the most marginalized communities in many developing countries. With entrenched historical structural injustices and limited public spending on inequality reduction projects; the community stand vulnerable to poverty and increase in inequalities. Like other indigenous communities around the world, the community also inhabits the most underdeveloped areas of the country with limited infrastructure. As a result, it is quite rare for these regions to attract private sector investment. This means that neither public policy solutions nor private sector interventions are available for the community. In the absence of public and private sector interventions, civil society interventions become the core source of community development. Therefore, while religious intervention in other parts of the world may not be necessary in public affairs; it is essential in such areas heavily affected by inequalities, and where minority groups do not have adequate political influence over public policy.

5. Conclusions

As indicated earlier, previous studies on the role of faith communities in development are dominated by two perspectives: (1) faith communities are agents of, or actors in development; and (2) faith communities are anti-nationalists or setbacks in development. These contrasting views are based on an analysis of historical studies, religious studies, as well as the interpretation of cases in various development experiences. Empirical studies measuring the influence, contribution or effect of religion on development indicate that (1) religion remains a source of motivation or inspiration for development action among religious communities; (2) drawing from their own faith; religious communities are actively engaged in development work across the world. In light of this, this study explores how an informal Quaker movement engaged in community development with the Maasai of Kenya.

The study employed Appreciative Inquiry technique to investigate and explain the movements' engagement in community development. The findings were interpreted through the lens of organizational ecology theory. Organizational ecology theory assumes that organizations are organic and vulnerable to external forces. Therefore, they respond to the external environment by making adjustments that enable them to survive or thrive in the changing environment. This study shows that in a way, pressure from Pentecostal movements and Islam provoked an inner awakening among Quaker congregations. This awakening inspired individual members to form an informal movement to respond to the pressure which they saw as a threat to the survival of the Quaker church. The movement drew its inspiration from the Quaker tradition to reduce inequality and promote inclusion. Members of the movement mobilized their resources which included social capital gathered from the members' lived experiences as a post-independence Kenyan generation that always pulled resources together to tackle public problems.

The movement became instrumental in negotiating space in the indigenous Maasai community and finding new meaning in engaging in development. This engagement is a continuous interaction where the church gives its social capital as well as material resources in exchange of space in the community. This is an example of spirituality that works as force for interfaith dialogue and development. Unlike western oriented Christian missions that are characterized by western power and resources when they come to Africa; this informal movement was organized by Kenyan youth who represented the local initiative without embedded influential power and resources. The movement represents the idea that Christian movements are not always powerful to exert influence on society. On the contrary, like any other organization, religious movements are vulnerable to environmental forces that threaten their survival.

This indicates that religious movements which will survive this era are partly those that innovate new ways to adapt to the environment and relate to the society. Successful religious movements are likely those that continue to play interventionary role in society, those that negotiate new space in society, and those that evolve to participate in the life of society and play a more meaningful role in development for example reduction of poverty and inequality. This study suggests that the emerging model of interaction between the Quaker movement and the community is not imperialistic or

expansionist. On the contrary, it is a model of mutual cooperation. This model can not only reduce ethnic tensions but can also propel new ways of thinking about religious activities, especially those aimed at improving the living conditions of the people, particularly in the absence of state and private sector services. Religious activities that are open to community input, participation, and interests do not only benefit the community but also shape the way faith communities apply their faith for public good.

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COULD ROMANIA BECOME A FOOD SECURITY SPACE IN EUROPE?

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Abstract: *This article presents the most relevant elements to be taken into account, if the dimensions of the present and future food security in Romania are to be analyzed, from comparative perspective with European level. Romania's economy has a real advantage, in relation with other European countries, in terms of natural conditions for practicing sustainable agriculture. All changes that have occurred in the field of agricultural property from Romania, in the last 25 years, reveal still poor recovery benefits from the agriculture development and strengthening food security. The dynamics of the key factors of food security – agricultural farms - hold a central place within the analysis of the current situation in agriculture. The article presents also some ideas regarding financing prospects and increasing capacity of the national system of agricultural production in the next decade. Now, Romania looks like being not yet a reliable source of food security in Europe, but this sounds like good news for investors and farmers too. Why and in what manner this situation could be changed soon, it is shown in the following text.*

The article uses various sources of documentation and publications of the United Nations Organizations, European Council, Eurostat, INS Romania, The Institute for Researching Quality of Life from Bucharest, some other Romanian Academy researching institutes and others.

Keywords: *risks, climate change, agriculture, farms, financing*

Introduction

Food security – an European (and not only) long-term imperative

Global food security is currently threatened by multiple risks, like diminishing agricultural production, firstly, amid degradation of soils, reducing fresh water

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resources, global warming (which evolves in tandem with deforestation), pollution and, last but not least, the demographic growth. Food security is becoming an increasingly difficult task in many regions of the globe, while farm workers improperly exploit soils (by excess or, more rarely, deficiency of soil treatment with chemical or natural fertilizers), causing more and more degradation. As result, in recent years, we have witnessed *a steady increase in food prices*. But although food prices have risen, it has not been able to brake *general growth of food demand* which intensified the agricultural effort for obtaining vegetal and animal production growing. Such efforts imposed the selection of some plant varieties with shorter maturity cycle, the extension of greenhouses, the use (and abuse) of hormones or drugs in order to accelerate the maturity of the animal productions, prevention of disease, and others. All these have resulted in time in the impoverishment of vital nutrients and beneficial microorganisms both of the soil and the products resulted, reducing on a side the ability to retain water of the soil, and on the other side lowering the native quality of the products.

On a different plan, factors like increasingly unfavorable climate, have already produced some *phenomena of desertification*. Extended lands from different areas of the globe, as from the United States, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East or northern China, have already been compromised due to degradation. FAO estimates 25 percents of the agricultural land of the planet is highly degraded, and 8 percents is degraded. John Crawford, a specialist on sustainable development, from Rothamstead scientific researching center - United Kingdom, argues that soil degradation will cause the supplementation of the land attracted in agricultural circuit, which will determine the climate warming accelerating [1] (*Ionescu, 2014*). Deforestation for agricultural purposes contributes to the increase in net greenhouse gas emissions. *But the increasing of the agricultural areas, from about 40 percent, as it is currently, to 70 percent from Earth's surface* to meet the demand for food by the year 2050, is imposed by world population growth to 9.6 billion by 2050 from 7.26 billion now. In the same time, the developing nations adopt Western diets in overwhelming proportions, involving a relatively high consumption of meat and food products that are not sold at fair prices, since, on many markets (even in developed countries), no account is taken in prices of the environmental costs and soil degradation.

Proper management of soil, according to the scientific principles of agriculture, is one of the basic principles of *sustainable agriculture*. But many factors can contribute to the degradation of soils, as well as the practice of extensive monocultures area, excessive use of fertilizers which can cause acidification or salinization of the soils, or microbial balance which negatively affects plant growth. To prevent these phenomena, it is necessary to improve the training of workers as well as that of the policy makers involved in the management of soil resources and agricultural technologies. The sharp increase of prices regarding agricultural products in 2008 has transformed itself into a food security topic debated worldwide. In 2012, have been reached new record prices for agricultural products, and in subsequent years, the agricultural markets remained unstable, though after 2012, the agricultural productions were higher again [1] (*Ionescu, 2014*).

To live in a sustainable way means to achieve a balance between social factors that influence the global way of life and concrete objective living conditions, offered by our

planet at present. It may mean also, to maintain consumption of goods and services of the global population *under the critical level of the natural resources reserves*, to avoid wastage of food, and through the use of technologies for efficiency obtaining of the production of goods and services needed in global consumption. On the other side, social welfare institutions are supposed to use values and propose social tasks in order to attain at least a decent minimum level of living within all social communities. And last but not least, to live in a sustainable way means to create premises for recovery and keeping of biodiversity, so increasing and strengthening the chances for normal living of the people (a stable, sustainable, healthy life) of present and future generations.

Many factors that influence the way of life of mankind from today are manifested in different regional contexts, more or less extensive. There is however *a number of factors with global impact*, or *broad impact factors*, which determine quality of life for large masses of people. These factors should not be lost from the attention also by policy makers, from the national and international economic and social institutions. Among such factors are demographic factors, climate change, some ecological factors, availability or absence of basic food resources, income levels versus the phenomenon of poverty, the critical resources for development of certain regions of the world.

The increasing of global population, between 1950-2015 - tripling its number, from 2.30 to 7.25 billion, amid the achievement of critical values for global pollution, reduction of natural resource development and increasing indebtedness of many countries, raises capital questions concerning the ongoing and quality of life of the people (present and future generations) from different regions of the world. Although after 1970, global population growth reduced pace, this means still a wider social base, and the annual world population has increased by about 80 million people (about the current population of Germany). In such conditions, it is possible that around the year 2070 to achieve a maximum rate of increase, after which the mankind will see a downward trend until the end of this century, global population hovering between 6.8 and 16.6 billion people [2] (*Das Gupta, 2014*).

The estimated population of Europe, according to the UN, was 731 million in 2007 [3] (**** 2011, World population prospects, UN*), around 11% of the world population (exact figure varying depending on the definition of the European continent geographical area). The European Union's population was 499 million people in 2008, including the non EU countries 94 million. Five other transcontinental states count other 240 million people, of which about half lived in Europe. Though the European population has grown continuously over the past four to five decades, the raising question is far from Asian or African rhythms. In these circumstances, if the present European population represents about 11-12% of the global population, in 2050, this will represent only around 7%. The decline in birth rates from European countries and the general growth of life is determining aging process of the population, particularly in the developed countries but not only, which will generate new economic and social problems (regarding in particular, institutions such as social security, social welfare, medical services, etc.) [4] (**** 2015, Demographics of Europe, UN*).

Of course, all these realities set on the front line of general agenda the matter of food (in)security in the coming years...

Investment in agricultural holdings in Romania - average and big agro-holdings versus small farms

The agricultural reforms from the countries entered EU after the 1990s have brought into question the issue of advantages and drawbacks of the various categories of farms. The financing measures launched by NPDR (The National Plan of Rural Development) are conditioned by the *coefficients of standard production* and *farm size*, depending on which the beneficiary falls to a certain amount of financing and may or may not be eligible for funding.

In Romania, as in all the other European countries, one of the main reasons that the size of the facility and its output are determined is reimbursable funds. *Standard coefficient of production* is an essential tool in calculating the size of the farm, in most measures of funding from NPDR, the level of *SO production value* being the exclusion criterion.

The standard coefficients of production available in 2015 for NPDR 2014-2020 were the same with those that the ranchers and the consulting companies have used in previous years.

Among the regulations underlying the calculation of the coefficients SO 2010 are the following: European Council Regulation (EC) No 1242/2008 establishing a *Community typology for agricultural holdings*; Regulation (EC) No 868/2008 regarding *the sheets of the farm* used for the purpose of determining incomes of agricultural holdings and assessing economic activity; Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning structural adjustment in agriculture surveys and survey on agricultural production methods and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 571/88 and others [5] (***) 2015, *Ce sunt coeficienții...*.

Classifying farms according to their size in Romania

Small farm - between 8000 (15 ha wheat) - 11999 (22 ha wheat) SO (standard output - production value)

Average farm - between 12000 (22 ha wheat) - 250,000 (472 ha wheat) SO

Big farm - over 250,000 (472 ha wheat) SO

Young farmer (special category) - between 12000 (22 ha wheat) and 50000 (94 ha wheat) SO

Source: [5] *** 2015, *Ce sunt coeficienții de producție standard și cât influențează dimensiunea fermei în accesarea fondurilor europene prin NPDR*, agrointel.ro, 26.03.2015

The calculation made by the authorities is considering SO/ha approved by Eurostat, which represents an average of the agricultural production from the years 2008 to 2012 [5] (***) 2015, *Ce sunt coeficienții ...*).

The dimension of farm matters in deciding whether to grant financial support from EU money. But the rules are odd and it is difficult for little competitors to apply.

The young farmers may submit a non-refundable project for funding only if the economic dimension of their farm is no less than 12000 SO. This is a medium size

farm, which could equate a 12 hectare vegetable farm cultivated with wheat or a 4 hectare farm planted with potatoes. A farm of cows needs a minimum 11 dairy cows. Young beekeepers qualify only if they hold more than 229 hives of bees.

By the measure addressed to the young farmers under 40, farms with a size between 12000 (22 ha of wheat) and 29999 (56 ha wheat) SO may receive no more than 40000 euro non-refundable support, while larger farms between 30000 SO (56 ha wheat) and 50000 SO (64 ha wheat) are eligible for the maximum amount of 50000 euro.

If the farm is higher, it no longer falls for funding through the establishment of young farmers and the applicant must opt for another measure of support from new NPDR [5] (***) 2015, *Ce sunt coeficienții...* ...). The size of the agricultural holdings shall be calculated by multiplying the existing elements (areas under cultivation, livestock) with standard coefficient of production associated with them (there is a list of these coefficients).

From historical perspective, mercantilists first pleaded for *relatively small holdings*, deeming them better suited to the more difficult economic conditions or, to the societies that have overcome a prolonged economic crisis. Physiocrats, but also a part of the English classics of the Economics claimed, as a rule, *the superiority of the big farms*, considering them better able to meet the continuous growing of food demand. But there are also economists who are the adepts of *medium agricultural holdings*, seeing in them a solution both for the food crunch which is looming on the horizon in the decades to come, and for the offer of jobs in rural areas.

The financial support granted to agricultural holdings from Romania

For farms with the economic dimension up to 500,000 SO, non-refundable public support will be 50% of the total eligible expenditure, but shall not exceed a maximum of:

- 500,000 euro and 100,000 euro for small farms - for projects that provide for simple contracts.
- 1,000,000 euro for sector and 200,000 euro for small farms vegetable sector - for projects that provide for construction-assembly
- 1,500,000 euro for vegetables in protection areas (greenhouses) and stockyard sector and 300,000 euro for small stockyard farms.
- 2,000,000 euro and 400,000 euro for small farms - for projects that provide the creation of integrated supply chains.

For farms with over 500,000 SO, public support will be 30% non-refundable and will not exceed a maximum of:

- 1,000,000 euro for vegetable sector, respectively 1,500,000 euro for vegetables in protected areas (greenhouses) and livestock sector - for the projects that provide construction-assembly
- 2,000,000 euro for projects proposing the creation of integrated supply chains.

Non-refundable support may grow, but the maximum rate of support combined shall not exceed 90% for small and medium-sized farms (up to 250,000 SO) and 70% for farms between 250,000 SO and 500,000 SO, for young farmers' investments (under 40), for integrated projects, the European partnership for innovation-PEI etc.

Source: [6] *** Document MADR, 25 martie 2015, <http://agrintel.ro/31790/coeficienti-standard-de-productie-2015-dimensiunea-fermei-accesarea-fondurilor-europene/>

The truth is, however, not the size of the agricultural holding provides the guarantee of correct methods application, healthy management of soils, waters and other categories of economic resources through agriculture, but first of all, *the level of training of specialized managers and farm workers* and then *the level of funding* or *the level of resources* available. In terms of size, each category of holding presents advantages and disadvantages, the superiority of one or the other being defined in a broad context of economic, ecological, social and even cultural conditions. *The size of the agricultural holdings* may be expressed by *the surface of farmland* or by *livestock*, in the case of cattle-breeding farms. Other indicators, as *the number of staff*, *financial resources*, *size* or *endowment indicators* (capital operation, the number of tractors and farm machinery etc.) indirectly reveal the size of a farm.

In the European Union, *the size of the agricultural holdings* can be expressed by *physics dimensions* (*hectares utilized as agricultural area*) and/or through *economic dimensions* (*the number of European-scale units* (ESU)). A unit of European dimension corresponds to a certain amount of *standard gross margin* (SGM), denominated in the single currency (euro) and periodically adjusted to inflation. Basically, an ESU equals approximately 1.5 hectares cultivated with wheat [7] (*Tofan, 2005*).

MBS per hectare or per *livestock* unit indicates production value per ha/unit, minus variable cost of production factors.

Services that manage the *farm accountancy data network* (FADN) establish, every two years, for each region, the unit amount of the SGM for crop and animal productions. The total SGM, expressed in euro, divided by 1200, show the number of ESU of the holding in question. Agricultural holdings are classified into *6 classes of economic size* (Table1) as follows: class 1:0-< 4 ESU; class 2:4-8; < ESU class < 3:8-16 ESU; class 4:16-40 ESU; < class < 5:40-100 ESU; class 6: > = 100 ESU.

Holdings exceeding certain thresholds are considered *professional holdings* and are under the observation of the FADN. Other holdings are considered *occupational* or *leisure* and are not subject to environmental concerns. Minimum thresholds of economic size of agricultural holdings are distinct for each EU Member State, reflecting the great diversity of agricultural structures.

In Western countries (primarily in the European Union), the best farms are the *family-private* direct working operations, managed or leased. In these productive units, the working time is shared with family life, the work being carried out by family members, employment (seasonal) being little used. But not always family farms are small or medium-sized, and large or very large farms aren't always based on employment.

Table 1. Minimum threshold of economic size of agricultural holdings in the Member States EU in 2004

Country	The threshold of economic size (in ESU)
Belgium, Netherlands, United Kingdom	16
Denmark, Germany, France, Luxembourg, Austria, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom (Northern Ireland), Malta	8
Slovakia	6
Italy, Czech Republic	4
Greece, Spain, Ireland, Portugal, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Slovenia	2
Cyprus	1

Source: [7] *** http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/rica/methodology1_fr.cfm, from Tofan Alexander, 2005, *Economic size of agricultural holdings*, http://anale.feaa.uaic.ro/anale/resurse/20,Tofan_A_-UR_Dimensiunea_economica_a_exploatatilor_agricole.pdf

The European trend is to upward the average size of the farms, which generates reducing of the total number of agricultural holdings, through the disappearance of a number of small holdings. This process is favored also by the force of the other branches of the economy - when they offer jobs and earning sources, they determine workers and farmers to leave the agricultural branch.

Phenomenon of reduction in the number of agricultural holdings and increasing the average dimension of a maturity holding manifested in most countries of the world, most in the last half of the twentieth century and, in particular, in the United States and Western Europe. In the USA, over the course of five decades, between 1940 and 1990, the number of farms decreased almost three times [8] (*Otiman, 2001*), and the average size of a farm has grown from 70.4 ha at 200 ha.

In Europe, where the agricultural area is smaller than that of the other continents, increasing the average size of farms has a lower rate. The EU needed direct actions on restructuring the agricultural holdings in order to obtain more economical profitable structures (Table 2). A decade after the establishment of Common Market, in 1968, the Mansholt Plan provided for 1990-2000, limits of 80-120 ha for grain farms, 40-60 cows for dairy cattle farms and 450-600 heads for pig farms.

Within the framework of the Common Agro Policy, in those six founding countries of the European Union, the total number of farms was reduced with 42%, between 1967-1997. The six countries have restructured so 2.7 million farms of small dimensions (1.3 million holdings with less than 5 ha of useful agricultural surface), which has allowed increasing the average size of a holding from 10 hectares in 1967 to 17 ha in 1997, [9] (*Vidal, 2000*).

Table 2. The situation of agricultural holdings in the EU and Romania, 2003

Class size (ha)	The European Union (25)			Romania		
	Number of holdings (thousands)	% from total number	% from total agricultural area	Number of holdings (thousands)	% from total number	% from total agricultural area
0-5	6110.1	61.9	6.2	4205.1	93.8	35.5
5-10	1293.7	13.1	5.9	218.9	4.9	10.3
10-20	974.4	9.9	8.8	37.4	0.8	3.4
20-50	823.1	8.3	16.6	9.5	0.2	2
≥ 50	669.3	6.8	62.5	14.1	0.3	48.8
Total	9870.6	100	100	4484.9	100	100
Average dimension (ha)	15.8			3.1		

Source: [7] *** *L'Agriculture dans l'Union Européenne - Informations économiques et statistiques 2005*, from Tofan Alexander, 2005, *Economic size of agricultural holdings*, http://anale.feaa.uaic.ro/anale/resurse/20_Tofan_A_-UR_Dimensiunea_economica_a_exploatatilor_agricole.pdf

The growth of the size of agricultural holdings determines *faster growth of economic value of the production* (through the intensification of the production/surface). In Italy, for example, between 1975 and 1995, the average size of a farm holding grew by 14.6% (from 7.5 to 8.6 ha), but the average economic dimension increased by 562.5% (from 3.2 thousand to 21.2 thousand ECUs). *The general trend of increasing farm size in the EU* results from a wide variety of situations. Currently, in the EU the most farms are medium-sized or large, all three types (including the small farms) being most frequently family run. Of the nearly 6.8 million existing holdings, 96% belong to a single person, 3% to companies and only 1% belongs to a group of individuals. Around 63% of farms in the EU are using less than an annual work unit (UTA, from French, *unité de travail per année*, i.e. work full time for one year, of a person from a farm, the equivalent of 2200 hours per year). Only 12% of farms use more than 2 UTA (especially in the Netherlands -36%, and Luxembourg -30%). Of the total work in a year in EU agricultural holdings (6,346 thousands UTA), 73.2% is family work, 16.3% of work is performed by employees and only 10.5% is seasonal work [10] (*Charlier, 2002*).

Managing of the agricultural holdings on economic principles, along with compliance with environmental requirements constitute fundamental premises for practicing sustainable agriculture. In principle, *sustainable agriculture* contains agricultural practice which reject industrial-type approaches, though they were used on a large scale in the late twentieth century. The concept of *sustainable agriculture* involves the use of agricultural techniques that value in the highest degree the natural factors, such as free air, natural fertilizers, biodynamic inputs, minimizing plowings, using clean water circuits, in order to maintain soil health, through the planting of different crops from

one year to the next, through alternation with grazing areas, paddies, avoiding the use of pesticides. The so-called agricultural industry is based on the *principle of monoculture* on very large areas, on mechanization, on the use of chemical pesticides, often excessive, fertilizers, biotechnology, and Government subsidies.

True, such principles have made possible extremely high agricultural production, which eventually produced food wealth and food prices at a relatively affordable level. These prices, however, ignored a number of costs, which existed without being registered in prices, however, added at ecological level costs (for example, through water and soil pollution or through excessive deforestation), to the loss of biodiversity, desertification of some large areas and, last but not least, to disbanding of many jobs in agriculture, or to the decline or disappearance of medium farms (200-400 ha).

According to *The 2012 Report regarding the development policies of the European Union*, Member States have given priority attention to *enhancing agriculture*, funding for sustainable practices, promoting ecosystem services, centering on practices developed at local level and encouraging smallholders to exceed the limits of rural livelihoods through the creation of wider associations of producers. It also was granted greater consideration to the supply chains and more viable marketing, claiming investment bank loans through private and highly responsible agricultural credits. In the report, it shows that the EU will continue its work in the broad sense of taxation standards increasingly regarding healthy eating and reducing the volatility of food prices.

Romanian agro-food system - differences near the average European level

A high-performance system can ensure the security of agricultural production and food safety of the population of a country, regardless of fluctuations in various factors that are brought to bear. At present, the cooperation of the European countries, in obtaining economic agents involved and agro-food products constitute one of the key factors of development and economic performance of the agro-food system in the EU. But nothing can be done if the fundamental economic agents or the supporting pillars of agriculture in the global level are not managed in supervision of the sustainable principles of agriculture.

The supporting pillars of agriculture

Soil

Soil, the base of the terrestrial life existence, represents about 29% of the land surface of the planet, the agricultural heritage representing only 6.4 percent. It achieves 98% of agro-food production, while the surface covered by water (71%), offer only 2% of the total food of the world.

- Globally, *soils with high and good fertility* represent 11% of the total; in Romania, their share is 28%.
- *Soils with moderate fertility* are spread over 27% of the surface worldwide; in Romania - 20%.
- *Low and very low fertility* global soil is 62% of the surface, while in Romania – 52%.

Romania has a high potential of production capacity of soils, which is not capitalized. The weight

of the soil with low and very low fertility is growing worldwide, and in Romania, as a result of climate change, but also because of the use of underperforming agricultural technology and of the exports of soil nutrients, taken with the harvest, which is to be repaid by fertilization.

Water resources

Water resources are vital. But the drought and desertification phenomena extended worldwide. Water occupies 71% of the Earth's surface and only 2.5% of the total returns as "fresh water". A result of the demographic explosion and the use of water in many areas of activity, available water resources will decrease substantially - from 7000 m³/year per capita in 2000, to 5100 m³/year per capita in 2025. Water is "the keystone" of agriculture. Currently, 70% of total water resources are used in agriculture; in anticipation of the year 2030, the quantities of water will be supplemented with 30-60%. "The absolute priority of investments made in agriculture should be oriented to the fitting of new irrigation systems.

Climate

Global climate change - the most serious challenge of the Millennium III with dramatic influences on the environment/natural resources, exceeding their capacity of recovery, may result in the impossibility of achieving food security. Under these conditions, industrial agriculture has to be reformed.

Biodiversity

Restriction of biodiversity as a result of global climate change, largely due to the negative effects of technical progress and exercise of intensive industrialization, cause adverse effects on agriculture. Conventional farming cannot ensure food security; conservative agriculture is an important ally, and biotechnological agriculture constitutes a valuable partner for the optimization of agricultural production [11] (*Hera, 2014*)

Human capital

World population grew from 2 billion inhabitants, in 1927 - of which 600 million were Europeans, to over 7 billion in 2012 - of which 900 million Europeans. In 2050, in the world will live about 9 billion people, of which one billion Europeans. Various international organizations affirm their concern regarding the imminent demographic crisis on the background of the climate and environment radical changes in the following decades. Managing primary resources to serving the needs of the people (water, food, shelter, health services and energy) against the background of an increase in the incidence of natural disaster and the accumulation of various stress factors become a real challenge. Demographic changes will generate numerous social problems in European space too, making demography a priority of European policy. The largest segment of the European population will continue to be represented by the age group 15-64 years, but this will be reduced from 67% in 2010 to 56% in 2060.

In Romania, the resident population from 1 January 2013 was approximately equal to that of 1969, hovering around of 20.01 million inhabitants. Romania stands still European average, in terms of the share of the population aged 15-64 years in total population - which in Romania was 68 percent, compared with the European average of 63,9%. Eurostat Demographic Projections for the average European level, conducted two decades ago, marked a reversal of the amount of the dependency rates by categories of age to year 2015, when the rate dependence of older people became superior to that of children. In Romania, however, demographic changes (young people emigration, low birth rate, increased life expectancy) have made the social dependence rata of the elderly to overcome that of the children in 2013.

Source: [12] *** 2012 *Ageing Report, European Commission*; [13] *** 2012, *Europa va avea cea mai bătrână populație din lume*, Calea Europeană)

It is not needed any high experts to see the slow progress of the Romanian agro-food system, or the many discrepancies and non-convergences between the Romanian and EU countries agriculture. The extremely high rates of rural poverty, the precariousness of food security in a large part of the Romanian urban and rural population results from (and not only) high prices of food products and extremely high volume of imported food. This kind of ideas are abundant in all kinds of academic studies, in mass-media, and lately, in *The Strategy of Food Safety and Security of the Romania for the period 2016-2035* [14] (Otiman, 2014).

Indeed, most of the data and information addressing the field confirm that *food security of Romania now, in spite of the remarkable potential of the natural resources of the country, can be characterized as rather a challenge*. It estimated that Romania, with adequate investment of kind, could provide safe food for 38.5 million people (the double of present Romanian population), in the horizon of 2030-2035 years, letting apart the agricultural non-food products for export of about 49-50 billion €. Of course, this is more than true, but when in Romania's history were spent actual massive money in agriculture or in rural infrastructure? After the year 2000, there were several years of different agricultural support funds, on average 500 to 600 million €/year, and a peak of investment of 908 million €/year in 2008. But this economic effort was not seen in any degree as agricultural yield growth in that period. Specialists in agriculture could probably affirm, Romanian agriculture is in fact a far too insensitive machine to refer the energy intake of a such insignificant financing magnitude. Luckily we shall never find out what would have been there without such investments.

Strategy of Food Safety and Security of the Romania for the period 2016-2035 [14] (Otiman, 2014) indicates also *the main weakness of the Romanian agro-food sector - financial resources*. On average, after 25 years starting from '89, the accumulation of fixed assets annual investments in agricultural holdings was of 38 Euro/ha/year. At the end of 2009, the annual stock of fixed capital in agricultural holdings was of 7.95 bills. Euro while in France, for instance, in the same period, the annual stock of fixed capital in agricultural holdings were of 309 Euro/ha/year, for a national stock of fixed capital of 232.3 billion Euro for agriculture. In Romania, the stock of fixed capital in relation to the agricultural area used, is of 541 Euro/ha (about 700 €/arable area + trees + vine) vs. France where the same indicator reached the value of 2100 Euro/ha (meaning a ratio of 1:3). Equipment with fixed assets of a Romanian farmer, compared to a French farmer is of 3,600 Euro versus 290,000 Euro per farmer, representing a ratio of 1: 80,6). And *the structure of the stock of fixed capital* from Romanian agricultural holdings is a lot different (derogatory), compared to France. While in France the "active" fixed assets (machinery, equipment, tractors, plantations, animal breeding and infrastructure) holds a share of 80%, the share of land capital being of only 20%, in Romania, the situation is reversed. Land value recorded a share of 67% (agricultural land at market value price in Romania being of 5-6 times lower than in France), and direct productive fixed assets represent in Romania only 1/3 of the capital stock of the farm.

Large differences that exist between the Romanian and the European agriculture performance ranks Romania among the countries with the lowest yields of agricultural land in the EU. Among the long list of the weaknesses of the Romanian agro-food system are, also, the following items:

- the cereal production (kg/ha) - 0.52 (52% from the European average); agricultural yields for the grain production of the Romanian farms in the period 1990-2010 was of about 2,770 kg/ha;
- the value of agricultural production (€/ha) - 0.32 (32% from European average);
- the GFCF (gross financial capital formation) (€/1ha) - 0.35 (35% from European average);
- primary agricultural production per hectare obtained by Romanian farmers (800-900 €/1ha) is 2-2.5 times lower than the European average (1,800-2,000 €/1ha);
- intermediate consumption as a measure of financial support addressed to technologies and agricultural production is of 715 Euro/ha in Romania, versus 8,369 Euro/ha in the Netherlands or 3,987 Euro/ha in Belgium;
- farmer's endowment with agricultural utilities in Romania is about 25 times weaker than that of the EU 15 (9,000-9,200 € in EU versus 350 € in Romania);
- gross value added in the Romanian agriculture is half of that pertaining to the EU-15, which makes the final agricultural yields in Romania of about 1,400-1,500 €/1ha vs. 2,400-2,600 €/1ha in the EU-15;
- agricultural production of small subsistence farms in Romania is the 400-420 €/1ha (four times lower than in the EU-15); as a result, the final food consumption of Romanian households ' is very high - 90-92% from the production of their farms, and in the case of semi-subsistence farms - 50-52%, compared with only 10 - 12% in EU-15 farms [14] *Otiman, 2014*).

By NRDP runs the Community funds intended for rural development. As a tool for assessing the social situation of consumers of goods and services in Romania, *monthly minimum consumption basket* was introduced in Romania through the "Emergency Ordinance of Government No. 217 of 24 November 2000 which approve the monthly minimum consumption basket ", in the base of Law No. 554/17.10.2001 [15] (<http://www.infolegal.ro/cosul-minim-de-consum-lunar/2015/05/26/>).

To guarantee food security might be considered the paramount of the Romanian population welfare, a major goal of the *Country and Society Project*. But *to guarantee that* is not about simple words, it results from a long sustained process and supposes the realization of some concrete objectives; we think, in no case, this should appear as the first objective of a *Strategy*, or as a theoretical and utopian settlement, but maybe in the final of a *Strategy*, as a result of many concrete actions. We say it knowing, for instance, the bad specifics of the banking system from Romania (and not of Romania, because really we do not have a national banking system, to follow the Romanian financial interests), who believes too little or not at all in the concept of Romanian *Strategy*... of any kind, as starting point in doing money. We know their low trust in agricultural initiatives.

We know also how difficult is even for the experienced farmer to access a bank loan, this being one of the few tools that would allow to turn any agricultural subsistence farm in a modern European one. "By comparing *the level of Romanian agriculture lending* with the level from other EU member countries, we notice major differences. If in 2009

in Romania registered an average bank loan of 110 Euro/ha, in Germany it was used 2126 Euro/ha, in France 1698 Euro/ha, in Hungary 255 Euro/ha, or ... in addition to the low level of credit disadvantages, cost of bank credit for Romanian farms is much higher compared to the developed countries of the European Union. In Romania, the interest plus commissions, induces a *real cost of bank credit in lei, two to three times higher* compared to the cost of funding sources from other developed countries of the EU. Low level of Bank lending to the Romanian agriculture favored the proliferation of commercial credit (credit provider which is much more expensive) as an alternative of "meeting need" of the farmers. In spite of being more expensive, commercial credit, is also more operative, so, it is more used by farmers in great financial need. Financing commercial loan cost is by about 20% over bank credit. Romania, with the average of 57 €/year for agricultural area performance, as *direct payments from the EU budget on an agro-hectare*, within the 2007-2013 in Romania, placed on the latest place in the EU-27 top, having earmarked only 11.2% of the level granted to Greece (507 €/1ha), 12.1% of the level granted to the Netherlands (469 €/1ha) and 12.9% of the level given to Belgium (€ 443/1ha) etc. " [14] (*Otiman, 2014*). But these are not the only barriers in the way of guaranteeing the Romanian food security. We know, also, the farmer's retractile and wary character in the face of any kind of association which is awaking the painful recent and ancestral memory about managing agro-property. It is difficult, if not impossible, to pretend a normal social behavior and to make modern agriculture, with a people traumatized psychologically for decades, if not centuries. We believe that, in such circumstances, it would be appropriate to think anything further than that, to find solutions for the formation of some agricultural associations to give confidence and, why not, even some safeguards, for the potential members, that in a worst agricultural year they are not threatened to go out of business, ruined economically.

Monthly minimum consumption basket

It represents also *an instrument of preventing possible severe crisis in food security of the households living in poverty*. In Romania, the theoretical concept of minimum monthly consumption basket was established by, at least, two public institutions: **The National Institute for Statistics (NIS)** from Bucharest, and the **Research Institute for Quality of Life belonging to National Institute of Economic Research, Romanian Academy**.

NIS concept is structured for an average household size, on the base of a sample of 2.804 people. All the necessary expenditure for living in a month by purchasing contains: (1) food products, (2) non-food products and (3) services. The structure and components of the monthly minimum consumption basket are approved, on a quarterly basis, starting from the basic salary of the national minimum wage policy and social policy.

The minimum monthly consumption rate expressed on a quarterly basis by the National Institute of Statistics is approved by decision of the Government. The monthly minimum consumption basket approved by O.U.G. No. 217/2000 have the following structure and components, calculated by the prices from October 2000:

- **Food strictly necessary for a rational consumer and a healthy population**, expressed in value and quantity: 34 food products *the nominees*, in total amount of

1,399,757 lei: 3.1 kg of flour, 5.89 cornmeal, 31.97 kg of plain bread, 0.5 kg of products of other kinds of breads, 0.7 kg of pasta, 1.4 kg or rice, 2.1 kg of beans, 13.18 kg of potato, 1.68 kg of carrot, parsley and parsnips, 2.5 kg dry onion, 3.8 kg pickled cabbage and pickles, 0.84 kg broth, 0.56 kg canned vegetable, 3 kg of apples, 0.56 kg citrus, 0.7 kg canned fruit, 0.7 kg of bovine meat, 2.52 kg pork meat, 2.8 kg poultry, 0.42 kg of mutton, 2.52 kg of meat preparations, 0.84 kg of fresh and frozen fish, 14.86 liters of fresh milk, 0.7 liters of buttermilk, 1.12 kg of cow's milk cheese, 0.7 kg sheep's milk cheese, 0.98 kg fresh cheese and cream, 42 eggs, 2.8 liters of edible oil, 0.7 kg of lard, 0.56 kg of margarine, 2.8 kg of sugar, 0.1 kg chocolate and candy and 2.38 liters of soft drinks.

- **Other food consumption needs**, in the amount of 209,964 lei.

Total food = 1,609,721 lei.

- **Non-food products**, cast (only) value:

- 6 non-food products *the nominees*, in amount of 384,039 lei, namely: clothing, knitwear, footwear, books and school supplies, medicines, hygiene items; other food items.

- **Other different non-food products**, in amount of 193,556 lei.

Total non-food products = 577,595 lei.

- **Services:**

- 9 service *nominees*, in amount of 826,897 lei, of which 5 expressed quantitatively: water, sewer, sanitation, electricity, thermal energy or other energy sources 0,86 Gkal, natural gas 29.16 cubic meters, radio-tv subscription, telephone 50 impulses, 42 passenger travel, medical services, taxes and fees.

- **Other services, different**, in the amount of 122,381 lei.

Total services = 949,278 lei.

Grand monthly total value of the minimum consumer basket = 3,136,594 lei.

The monthly minimum consumption basket is a particularly important indicator which expresses :

- 1) the level and the evolution of the national index of consumer prices for goods, services or other necessities of the consumers living (rational, healthy);
- 2) overall level of consumption;
- 3) the minimum cost of living ;
- 4) general price index and index of services tariffs (price index and the retail tariffs).

It offers also, a scientific foundation for social policy addressed to:

- 1) basic minimum salary;
- 2) wage policy;

3) other social policies.

The Research Institute for Quality of Life (RIQL) from Romanian Academy structured, starting from 1990, a new concept of *decent minimum basket of consumption which*, even if it is rather close to the concept belonging to the NIS, it allows a better distribution of expenses and a better quality of life for the population at the margin of poverty (Table 3).

Table 3. The structure of the minimum consumption basket, for the different types of households from Romania. Comparison between *the decent minimum basket of consumption of RIQL* and *the minimum consumption basket of the NIS (%)*, 2014

Total consumption expenditure	Family of 2 employees with 2 dependent children (RIQL)/employee head of family (NIS)		Family of 2 pensioners (RIQL)/Pensioner head of family (NIS)		Family of 2 farmers with 2 dependent children (RIQL) /Farmer head of household (NIS)	
	Through MD	NIS	Through MD	NIS	Through MD	NIS
1. food and drink	46.1	44.1	41.2	48.8	41.5	61.7
2. clothing, footwear	6.0	6.3	4.2	4.0	10.8	5.5
3. housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels	13.1	16.6	17.8	18.8	13.5	12.2
4. furniture, equipment of dwelling	3.1	3.8	3.9	4.3	7.9	4.0
5. health	5.7	2.7	8.5	8.1	1.9	1.8
6. transport	7.1	8.2	7.8	4.0	4.5	4.8
7. postal and telecommunications	0.9	5.5	1.4	4.1	3.6	3.3
8. education, recreation and culture	2.3	6.3	2.0	3.8	3.0	3.4
9. Miscellaneous products and services	5.7	4.6	3.2	3.3	3.3	2.2
10. hotels, cafes, restaurants	-	1.9	-	0.8	-	1.1
11. safety and savings fund	10.0	-	10.0	-	10.0	-
Total value lei 2014	2330	2078.5	1447	1362.2	1878	1312.5

Source: [16] *** *Coordonate ale nivelului de trai în România, „Nivelul cheltuielilor totale de consum, pe destinații și categorii de gospodării, după statutul ocupațional al capului gospodăriei în anul 2014”, INS, București, 2015.*

Note: MD = decent minimum basket of consumption; RIQL = The Research Institute for Quality of Life; NIS = National Institute of Statistics. Data for *minimum basket of consumption* and *decent minimum basket of consumption* are from October 2014.

The distance between the minimum basket of consumption (NIS)/decent minimum basket of consumption (RIQL) and the *overall consumption expenditure* of some of the *main family structures from Romania* may be seen, using the Table 4. We see that, in fact, the average farmer, pensioners and employees families are spending actually at the level of minimum basket (NIS figures) being much under the threshold line of the decent minimum basket of consumption (RIQL).

Table 4. The overall consumption expenditure by destination and by categories of occupational status of the household head in Romania 2014

Destinations	Total households	Employees	Pensioners	Farmers
Total consumption expenditure (lei)	1637.5	2078.5	1362.2	1312.5
1. Food and non-alcoholic beverages (%)	40.0	35.9	42.2	51.7
2. Alcoholic beverages, tobacco (%)	7.7	8.2	6.6	10.0
3. Clothing/footwear (%)	5.3	6.3	4.0	5.5
4. Housing, water, electricity, gas (%)	17.2	16.6	18.8	12.2
5. Furniture, equipment of dwelling (%)	4.0	3.8	4.3	4.0
6. Health (%)	4.6	2.7	8.1	1.8
7. Transport (%)	6.2	8.2	4.0	4.8
8. Communications (%)	4.7	5.5	4.1	3.3
9. Recreation and culture (%)	4.5	5.6	3.6	3.2
10. Education	0.5	0.7	0.2	0.2
11. Hotels, cafes, restaurants (%)	1.4	1.9	0.8	1.1
12. Miscellaneous products and services (%)	3.9	4.6	3.3	2.2

Source: [16] *** *Coordonate ale nivelului de trai în România, „Nivelul cheltuielilor totale de consum, pe destinații și categorii de gospodărie, după statutul ocupațional al capului gospodăriei în anul 2014”, INS, București, 2015.*

Analyzing the social situation of the population from Romanian, we see that many regions where there are more inhabitants with high unemployment rate and minimum wages share in the entire population, are in the same time, those where more money are spent on basic food comparing with some of the prosperous areas of the country.

Prices of basic foods (potatoes, beans, meat, milk, eggs) vary from one county to another and, as a rule, they are not lower in poorer areas. Maybe is not by purpose, but too often, in Romania, the most expensive food is available in poorer counties. For instance, in the first three months of the year 2013, as in all periods of the previous years, potatoes and beans have been rising the most. Statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture have shown that the highest prices of these vegetables were in the poorest counties: the most expensive potatoes (over 2.5 lei/kg) were in Vaslui, Iași, Neamț,

Bihor and Alba, and cheaper ones (below 2 lei/kg) were in Timiș, Cluj, Covasna and Mehedinți; the most expensive beans were (10 lei/kg) in Alba, Bihor, Satu Mare, Neamț, Vaslui Valcea, while the cheapest (6-7 lei/kg) was in Bucharest, Calarasi, Constance, Suceava and Timiș [17] (***) 2013, *Prețuri mari pe piața buzoiană a alimentelor de bază, ...*).

The perspective of increasing food security of the population from Romania

A realistic assessment and an informed prediction of the Romanian agriculture future were carried out by a collective from the Institute for Agricultural Economics of the Romanian Academy [14] (*Oțiman, 2014*). This presents some of the key indicators of the current production capacity of the Romanian agro-food system and the prediction until 2030. Anyone seeing the figures from Table 5 could conclude that the Romanian agricultural context looks rather optimistic. There is much hope in the expectations of the experts and people as concern the future of the Romanian food security. But a former Minister of agriculture and rural development asserted in 2014: " even if *Romania is far from a food crisis*, there are necessary a better stability of the market, and many measures to strengthen the productive capacity of the farmers. We need to ensure efficient use of water in agriculture and to develop competitive advantages to farmers. It is our mission to make sure that these measures work, the Romanian agro-food industry has the best prospects of development and, most importantly, it has a future! The social value of agriculture should be appreciated and rewarded and also, the agricultural activities that contribute to the protection of the environment or the preservation of certain qualitative parameters of productive resources. All these are added-value, service in public benefit, and we all benefit of them. We must correctly appreciate the importance of labor in agriculture" [18] (Daniel Constantin, in ***) *Securitatea alimentară a României, 29 mai 2014, Focus Agricol*).

Table 5. The production capacity of the Romanian agro-food system (horizons 2015, 2020, 2025, 2030)

No. crt.	Specification	Strategic horizons				
		2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
1.	Utilization of ecological resource, Ku	0.39	0.50	0.61	0.72	0.83
2.	Average conventional cereals yield Q, kg/ha	2770	3500	4270	5040	5810
3.	Agro-area useful, thousand ha	11000	11000	11000	11000	11000
4.	Agricultural production, grain equivalent mil. t	30.5	38.5	47.0	55.4	63.9
5.	Crop production Value, bill. €	12410	15670	19130	22550	26000
6.	Animal agricultural production, value bill. €	6680	10450	15650	22550	31800
7.	The coefficient for the processing of agricultural output, k	1.04	1.28	1.52	1.76	2.00

No. crt.	Specification	Strategic horizons				
		2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
8.	Animal production/vegetal production, value	0.35	0.40	0.45	0.50	0.55
9.	The value of primary agricultural production, bill. €	19090	26120	34780	45100	57800
10.	The value of agro-food production, bill €	19850	33430	52870	79380	115600
11.	Food consumption, €/loc and year	1000	1500	2000	2500	3000
12.	Domestic food consumption, bill. €/year	18300	33000	44000	55000	66000
13.	Insured population with food internal source, mil. inhabitants	18.3	22.3	26.44	31.75	38.50
14.	Import/Export value/D	-1550	+430	+8870	+24380	+49600
15.	Fixed assets, €/1ha	700	1000	1350	1700	2100
16.	The stock of fixed capital, bill.. €	10.3	14.7	19.8	25.0	30.8

Source: [14] Oțiman Păun Ion (coord.), 2014, *Strategia siguranței și securității alimentare a României, calculații interne IEA*, <http://www.acad.ro/viataAcademica/doc2015/i0307-StrategiaAgroalimRo-PIOțiman.pdf>

The current economic development of agriculture and social situation in Romanian rural area indicate some major changes happened in the last quarter century: the extinction of the collectivist structures, with simultaneous demise of the economic base and former farm cooperatives, followed by the atomization of properties on the agro-land and general orientation towards subsistence agriculture. Massive depopulation and demographic ageing of the villages, with the consequence of a large impoverishment of the population from rural area were also, the main social trends in the last 25 years. All these signify, in fact, the failure of reform and of all the policies directed to rural area in the last 25 years.

The General Agricultural Census of 2010 from Romania shows that *unused agricultural land* was of 896 thousand hectares, and the *agricultural area at rest* was 953 thousand hectares. Utilized agricultural surface decreased with 875,000 hectares, from the 13.93 million hectares in 2002 to 13.05 million hectares at the end of 2013 [19] (****2013, Anchetă Structurală în Agricultură 2013, INS*). Romania holds the 7.6% of the utilized agricultural area at European Union level, being exceeded by France, which uses 27.8 million hectares (16%), by Spain, with 13.6 million hectares (23.75%), by the United Kingdom, with 9.7 million hectares (16.88%), by Germany, with 16.7 million hectares (9.6%) and by Poland, with 14.4 million hectares (8.3%). Although using a much reduced area, Romania holds now about one third (31.5%) of the total number of farms in the EU, i.e. 3.63 million, downwards with 6 percent in 2013, compared to 2010. In 2013, Italy owned 13.2% of EU farms, Poland had 12.3% and Spain 8.1% [20] (*Ghinea, 2015*).

"**Natural limiting factors for agricultural crops in Romania** is **water**, which, **capital**, led to obtaining, for two and a half decades (1990-2013), a vegetal production

the average EU-15. The average use of the production capacity of natural organic resource was only 0. The main **threat** on the yields of primary agricultural production" [14] (*Otiman, 2014*).

Romania has *the highest share of the population resident in rural* from the EU (44.9% of total population) [21] (**** 2014, INS*). Most municipalities with fewer than 50 inhabitants/km² are located in the West of the country, as opposed to areas in the East and South, where predominates densities of rural population over 100 inhabitants/km². *The demographic dynamics in rural* is intensely negative. So, the main trend being the massive depopulation of villages, in the coming decades, we shall see the massive decrease of the population working in agriculture. Demographic decline is caused both by disrupting the demographic structure continuities, through aging, but also by migration across the border, and less towards the Romanian urban of younger generations. The decreasing of rural population in Romania was somewhat slower than in other countries (employed population in agriculture is decreasing, in these years, with only 800,000), also as a result of the returning of many retired people, residents in the urban area, to the subsistence agriculture, in the 1990s (Table 6).

Table 6. Employment of population in agriculture in some European countries (% from total population)

Country/Year	1980	1990	2012
G. Kingdom	2.6	2.1	1.2
France	8.4	5.6	2.9
Italy	14	8.8	3.7
Hungary	22, 10	18.2	5.2
Bulgaria	24.4	18.5	6.4
Poland	...	25.2	12.6
Romania	29.8	29.1	29

Source: [22] World Bank cited from Mihai Adelina, Sorin Pâslaru, 2014, *O treime din populația ocupată lucrează în agricultură, la fel ca în anul 1980*, <http://www.zf.ro/eveniment/o-treime-din-populatia-ocupata-lucreaza-in-agricultura-la-fel-ca-in-anul-1980-13133308>

According to the NIS Romania [21] (**** INS, 2014*), in Romanian villages, 66.1% of families do not realize enough income for daily living.

The child nutrition state in Romanian rural area

In a social research, coordinated by World Vision, in 2012 (128 communes from 8 counties), on the quality of life, were gathered the following information:

- Although they are interested in assuring good development conditions for their children, a third of the parents consider the food they offer is not qualitative, even if they can assure three meals a day;
- 3% of parents consider they cannot offer their children sufficient food;
- Results are in direct relation with children's answers: a quarter consider that the food received is not sufficient, or qualitative or that they even have days when they go to bed hungry.

Source: [23] extract from Bădescu Gabriel, Niculina Petre, 2012

'Analysis report concerning the contracting of social services in the context of national and European ' achieved in the framework of a project of the Federation of non-governmental Organizations for child (FONPC) and UNICEF Romania, shows that nearly *one-third of the families of children in rural areas do not have sufficient income for daily living* [24] (Nistor, 2015). As result, the population of working age is migrating and *the phenomenon of aging accentuates*. The share of the population over 65 years and over, in rural area, amounted to 18.3% from the total population in 2012 (with almost 5% more than in 1990).

Table 7. Number of persons occupied in agriculture Romania

Year	Number of persons in agriculture (mil.)	% of population	Year	Number of persons in agriculture (mil.)	% of population
1950	5.23	74	1989	3.06	28
1960	6.25	65	1992	3.44	33
1970	4.87	49	2000	3.57	41
1980	3.09	29	2012	2.68	29

Source: [25] Murgescu Bogdan, 2010, *România și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500-2010)*, HISTORIA, INS, <http://www.zf.ro/eveniment/o-treime-din-populatia-ocupata-lucraza-in-agricultura-la-fel-ca-in-anul-1980-13133308>

The employment in agriculture (29% in 2012) returned after a long period (32 years) of raising employment in Romanian agriculture, on the background of the dramatic decline of employment in other sectors of the economy (Table 7), including the economic crisis, when Romanians got back to practicing subsistence agriculture.

Looking at the Romanian *human capital*, the share of the population occupied in agriculture, ranks Romania last among European countries (holds the highest share of the population occupied in agricultural production in the total population), the figure

relating to year 2012 indicating in fact a reversion of the Romanian economy. But for over three decades, Romania's agriculture stagnated, at least in terms of decreasing employment. For now, the situation in Romania is similar to that of countries like Ecuador, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, or Philippines. While European countries have developed industry and services, on behalf of the efficient use of the available workforce, Romania, in the lack of more favorable economic alternatives, retain yet a third of the population employed in agriculture, where through her heavy work this generates only around 6% of GDP.

Conclusions

Currently, food security from Romania may be threatened by a number of risks and deficiencies regarding the availability, affordability, and stability of national agrarian sector.

Very many economic vulnerabilities or other unmanaged or poorly managed can be added as the risks of food security - for example, the failure of the development of the infrastructure, lack of the storage facilities in seasons with low prices on exports (domestic capacity of grain storage and others) means selling them without profit or with small profit.

After Romania's accession to the EU, and after the process of restitution of ownership on agricultural land, agriculture in Romania did not carry out other notable steps in relation to the objectives of the restructuring and reforming through European PAC. Where, however, changes were adopted they remained without major consequences or have even had negative consequences with regard to the improvement and modernization of the agro-food system. European Community agricultural policies have proven difficult to be assimilated into a chaotic and extremely stiff national system, with a low degree of mobility and openness to new experiences. The difficulty to attract European funds for both rural development and agricultural practices was composed with low accessibility of the Romanian agricultural products on European agricultural market, but also on the domestic market, where they entered in the competition with imported European products.

Although food security in Romania exists as future strategic development objective, at present it is affected by various risks and threats. Ecological and economic risks of the Romanian agro-food sector deepens and complicates in relation to the Common Agricultural Policy by competitive type, which only exacerbate the structural disadvantages and historical gap between Romania and Europe agriculture.

Also extremely low capacities of negotiation within the European structures, implementing or maintaining domestic agricultural production, as well as protecting the strategic interests of Romania's economy (i.e., the absolute unfair competition from EU level, where agriculture gross added value is minimal - 6.5% from the total GAV - negatively influences the balance of food security in Romania).

On the other side, to develop the sustainable ecological balance of the Romanian rural space is also a real challenge. Forest Cover net loss at the national level, so vital in the

present conditions of the climatic regime, gets every day a growing ecological threat for Romania. The level of afforestation and green coverage is already, from several years ago, under the European average cover. However, legal or illegal, the cutting of the woods that should not cut in Romania continues, and too often, wood take the road of abroad, despite all the laws and authorities which ensure that this does not happen. On the other hand, in the cities, there is a struggle for life and death of the civil society with various staff members of the local administration who want to disband public parks in order to build any hotel.

Compared with a national average of green cover of 48% (20% natural meadows, 2% plantations and 27% forests), for instance, in the Danube Plain and Dobrogea – where there are the most extensive agricultural areas of the country - the green coverage is of only 14-15% [14] (Oțiman, 2014). So how will we be able to change this reality, when we know that the new law and conditions of the ownership over the land and especially forests contain no commitment means to make the owners responsible for what they allow to takes place on their property?

The serious deficiencies of the irrigation system at national level constitute also a threat to the food security, taking into account the adverse climate change forecast for future years, and the intensely competitive environment and unfavorable to financing/co-financing agricultural activities at national and community level.

Underdeveloped transport infrastructure, linked to the lack of spaces for the storage of agricultural production, increase prices of food especially in periods of off-season or crises. Development of optimal investment in this field should be an absolute priority if we really want to guarantee the food security of the population.

Food security is already affected, but not so much through lack of food, but because of the increase in imports, the low purchasing power of the population and by consequence, in the relatively low level of domestic production and consumption, in the lack of competitiveness of the agricultural sector, amid the lack of a coherent strategy applied for sustainable and long-term development. Romania is a net importer of agro-food products (60-70% of food consumed), suggesting an inability to exploit own agricultural resources and an increased vulnerability to fluctuations in prices on the foreign exchanges.

Thus, we see that currently Romania enjoys a precarious food security due to: low yields of agricultural production, lack of the necessary infrastructure for modern agriculture, economic and social vulnerability of human capital employed in the agricultural sector, the lack of a minimum required infrastructure for activities of storage, transportation and marketing of agricultural products, the existence of vast areas of land uncultivated or rudimentary worked and, and last but not least, the relatively low purchasing power of consumers of food from Romania.

Any prime initiative to improve food security in Romania involves three categories of main activities, which are designed and employed specifically at national and local level:

- 1) raising the educational and vocational training for people from rural areas, in order to increase productivity in agriculture and to facilitate Romanian labor force transition from agriculture to other sectors of the economy;
- 2) intensification of awareness activities of the rural population, with regard to the need to preserve and improve the quality of the natural environment from the Romanian villages, including practicing a sustainable management on all areas from agriculture and forestry;
- 3) modernization of farming practices, forestry and associated processing industries, to increase productivity and improve the competitiveness of the agro-food sector in general. The national rural development plan (NRDP) of Romania provides a conceptual instrument and a tool for the integration of the Romanian agriculture in the EU's agro-food economy.

We still believe that in spite of the actual rather difficult economic and social conditions, Romania has good opportunities for developing a modern agriculture. But although the world seems pretty worried and make rather pessimistic predictions with regard to globally food security, the opinions of specialists and business people, in terms of whether or not the situation of Romania is under favorable auspices are contradictory. Some specialists say that Romania, should actually be supplying and not importing food security, especially through its agricultural potential, apt to feed a population several times more numerous than that currently living in Romania. However, in 2014, imports of agro-food products of Romania were 4.895 billion euro [26] (***) 2015, *La ce valoare se ridică importurile...*), which speaks for itself about the degree of meeting the domestic demand for food, of the Romanian agriculture today. Agro-food goods supplied by the domestic market must, in the first place, be available as logistics, accessibility (purchasing power) and quality, so they satisfy the nutritional-metabolic needs of consumers.

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STATE OF EMPLOYMENT AMONG THE ROMA PEOPLE¹

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Abstract: *The state of the Roma people is a subject of interest for all media (political, economic, cultural, social), turning into a subject on the working agenda of the actors involved in the development of support policies for the Roma population. The policies for the social inclusion of the Roma people require an integrating approach, a properly planned process and unitary actions, followed by the development of specific strategies, programs and projects. The employment policies for the Roma people stipulate, among the directions of action, a higher rate of employment among the Roma population, the development of programs for the development of the entrepreneurial capacity of the Roma, improving the skills of the Roma people in agreement with labour market requirements, externalization of work mediation services, professional information and counselling of the people seeking a job. The inclusion of the Roma people into the labour market has multiple effects, as well as real benefits, by reducing the cost of the social protection and by removing their dependency on such type of protection.*

Keywords: *Roma people, inclusion, labour market, workforce, unemployment,*

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1. Current context concerning the Roma minority

The problem of the Roma minority became a visible subject both in the public debates, and on the European and national political agenda, and the democratic changes of the 1990s influenced this fact.

The European Union member states share the responsibility of inclusion of the Roma people and, to accomplish that, they have available several instruments and policies within their areas of responsibility. They must provide equal opportunity for the Roma people to education, employment, professional formation and healthcare services.

According to Directive 2000/43 of the European Commission, the European Union has developed a legal framework supporting the social integration of the marginalised groups and the provision of enhanced protection against racism and racial discrimination, as well as other actions specific to the promotion of Roma people inclusion, within several general strategic visions (Lisbon Strategy, Europe 2020 Strategy), or specifically targeting this minority (Decade for Roma people inclusion, 2005-2015; European Platform for Roma People Inclusion, European Framework for the Strategies for the National Integration of Roma People – 2020).

One of the most important conclusions of the European Summit on the Roma people was the acknowledgement of EU role in supporting the member states to implement their national policies, by coordinating these policies and by granting financial support through structural funds.

In Romania, the policies promoting the social inclusion of the Roma are included in several national documents that assume European elements: the National Plan for Poverty Control and for the Promotion of Social Inclusion; the Decade for Roma People Inclusion 2005-2015; the Joint Social Inclusion Memorandum; the National Plan of Development, 2007-2013; the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013; the Operational Sectoral Plan – Human Resources Development, the Governance Program 2009-2012, and the specific, “Strategy for the Improvement of Roma People Status in Romania, 2012-2020”, have the stated purpose of ensuring the socio-economic inclusion of the Roma people living in Romania.

The “Strategy for the Improvement of Roma People Status in Romania, 2012-2020” is the main document reflecting the commitment of the Romanian authorities to solve the Roma problem. The permanent partnership with the civil society in applying specific programs is an important component of the Strategy; it aims to improve significantly the situation of the Roma people and to yield sustainable results.

The general framework of public policies on the Roma population was set through the Governance Program 2013-2016. Chapter “*Minorities*” has the objective to “*improve the situation of the Roma people and to continue the policies aiming to close the gap between the Roma population and the society at large*”. Within the current Governance Program (2013-2016), the Government of Romania admits that Roma issues are a specific area that requires a framework of policies and correlation with the directions on poverty and social exclusion control agreed at EU level.

The public policies focus on social measures among which: education, employment, healthcare, migration, measures to control discrimination and poverty, promote the equal opportunity.

The employment policies for the Roma people stipulate, among other, a higher employment rate of the Roma, the design of programs supporting the development of the entrepreneurial capacities of the Roma, improved skills of the Roma people, in agreement with labour market requirements, externalization of the work mediation services, the information and professional counselling of the job seekers. The response of the public employment policies is often rather delicate, assuming or completing initiatives from NGOs. The key concepts that should define the occupational situation of the Roma are: integrated approach, access to a decent place of work, economic capacity. All employment policies should be analysed in terms of their impact on the Roma people, and the decision of their definition and implementation should take this analysis into account.

During the past decades, the number of people that migrate (Roma people included) increased, the types of migration diversified and the dynamics of migration became increasingly heterogeneous. The European migration of the Roma people emerged as subject of worry and of dispute or negotiation of relations with different countries of destination. Although undoubtedly important, Roma migration continues to remain one of the least investigated components of the migration abroad of the Romanian people. The phenomenon of migration must be considered in relation with the benefits for the Roma people that migrate, for their families and for the communities of origin. Investigations on the subject of Romanian Roma migration might be source of information supporting the design and implementation of public policies with sustainable outcomes.

Although there are many papers in this field, although policies were developed and programs have been promoted, both at the national and at the European level, for the integration of the Roma people into the labour market, their marginalization and discrimination is current reality, far from being eliminated.

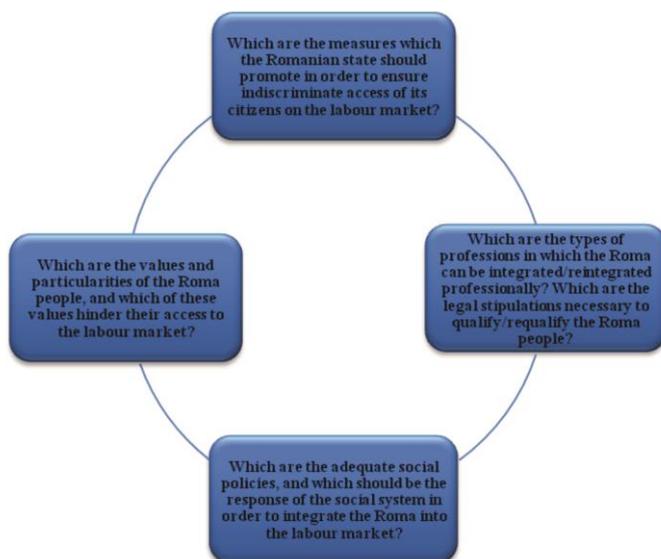
Projects have been run, supporting the participation of the Roma on the labour market, whose purpose was to integrate and absorb as many Roma people as possible into the labour market. The project “*Young and competitive Roma people, with equal opportunities on the labour market*”, implemented in 2010-2012 by the foundation Centre of Resources for the Roma Communities, aimed to facilitate the access of the young Roma on the labour market, decreasing thus the social exclusion, discrimination and risk of poverty.

In 2010-2012, the Soros Foundation implemented the project “EU INCLUSIVE - transfer of data and experience on the integration of Roma people on the labour market, between Romania, Bulgaria, Italy and Spain”. The objective of the project was to develop cooperation practices in the field of Roma people inclusion, by the transnational transfer of data and local experiences, supporting the inclusion of this vulnerable group on the European labour market and enhancing the capacity of the organizations concerned with the integration of the Roma living in Romania, Spain, Italy and Bulgaria. The Roma people continue to belong to the vulnerable groups on the labour market from Romania. The low educational level, next to discrimination and incongruences between the school education and labour market requirements, influence adversely the access of the Roma to the labour market.

Several initiatives of social economy have recently been developed among the Roma communities, and some of them tried to revive the traditional Roma crafts and to adapt to the modern crafts. Project „ROMA-RE” (Foundation PAEM Alba) aimed to establish “five resources centres supporting the social enterprises (operational as of 2013), with the view to promote the social entrepreneurship of the Roma.” Another study finished in 2012 (UNDP) was *Social economy and Roma communities – challenges and opportunities*. The project promotes social economy as innovating instrument for integrated development. Another project, *Fem. Rom* has been implemented in 2009-2012 by the Equal Opportunity Directorate within the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection, whose purpose was to improve the access of Roma women on the labour market by the development of integrated services for them – information, professional counselling and employment.

There already is a rich experience accumulated by the various organisations which financed or implemented projects supporting the integration of Roma people on the labour market, in the field of education and healthcare in Romania. The implementation of such initiatives within the Roma communities and the lessons learnt by the people directly involved (governmental institutions, financers, non-governmental organisations, communities) helped us identify the most frequent problems which can have an adverse impact on any social initiative in matters of the social and economic inclusion of the Roma. However, there still are problems to which the studies conducted so far didn't find real answers, as shown in Figure 1, because the answers to some questions don't reside in statistics.

Figure 1: Social problems within the Roma communities



Source: Adaptation after Mihăilescu V., 2003

The exploration of the studies and projects which aim the social inclusion of the Roma population prove that the social-economic rights of this vulnerable group should be transposed in practice, i.e., should provide them with equal opportunities of access to education, healthcare and decent work. The programs and policies, integrated in governmental policies, must rely on an integrated approach and must be thus conceived, as to act on the causes that generate and support the disadvantages of the Roma people on the labour market, in their access to quality education, healthcare services, regarding the evaluation of the implications of migration, etc. the public policies in all fields (education, healthcare, migration and occupation), should be analysed in terms of their impact on the disadvantaged groups, and the decision on their definition and implementation should also take into consideration this analysis.

2. General characteristics of the active and inactive Roma population

The very small proportion of Roma population active on the labour market remains an issue confronting the Romanian society. Just about a tenth of the active Roma population is employed on the labour market, particularly in areas such as city cleaning, or other areas with low level of training.

There is a small proportion of Roma people who conduct legal self-employed activities (PFA, commercial activities, etc.). However, a significant proportion of the Roma population is not employed, and the way in which they earn an existence is almost impossible to determine. “Less than half of the unemployed Roma, receive social benefits”. (Toma, S., Fosztó, L., 2011).

The improvement of the level of education among the non-Roma population worsened further the employment problem of the Roma population. This effect coincided with the “moment of introducing provisions which made even more difficult the employment and preservation of the job by the people which didn’t graduate at least 10 grades”. (Mihăilescu V., 2003)

The data from before and after 1990, show that the participation of the Roma people to the labour market and their level of professional skills is much below the national average. Previous research (with results published in 1993, 2002, 2010, 2012, 2014), showed that the proportion of Roma population with no qualification is very high compared to the general population.

The 1992 data showed a poor qualification: 79% unskilled, 16% trained in modern professions and 4% trained in traditional crafts (Zamfir, 1993); in 1998, 52% of the Roma stated that they have no profession. In 2010, 44% of the occupied Roma people didn’t have any qualification at all.

The situation of occupation didn’t change significantly over the recent years, and studies revealed the following characteristics for the Roma minority: high level of illiteracy, with 25% of the population aged 16+ not knowing to read or write”(Cace, S., Preoteasa, A.M., Tomescu, C., Stănescu, 2010); low level of qualification: 39.2% of the occupied and unoccupied Roma (unemployed and working in the household) who

sought a job during the past year, stated not to have any qualification, while 77.3% of them have an educational level which doesn't allow any formal qualification; employment rate much below the national average: 57.7% compared to 63% for the age group 18-64, 39.6% for the age group 18-59, perform low-level or occasional jobs, next to further 21% working just in their household; the people aged 15 and more have an employment rate of about 40% compared to 58.8%, the national average in 2010 (according to EUROSTAT); 51.5% of the people aged 16 and more declared that they never worked, and just 10% declared that they worked permanently during the recent years (Tarnovschi, D., Preoteasa, A.M., Şerban, M., 2012).

Several programs, projects and studies supporting the social inclusion of the Roma aimed to influence positively their social integration: facilitate their access to good quality education, to healthcare services; absorption and maintenance of as many as possible Roma people on the labour market.

UNDP/World Bank/European Commission research data for 2011 from the *Pilot project, Roma communities: Instruments and Methods for Data Evaluation and Collection*, show that the employment rate (15-64 years of age) of the Roma population was about 30%, with large differences between men and women: just 19% of the Roma women, and 42% of the Roma men were employed. Also, just 22% of the Roma people aged 15-24 are active on the labour market.

UNDP research show that in 2011, of the total number of employed Roma (15-64), 43% were unskilled workers, 9% had some level of qualification, 18% were skilled workers, 16% were working by the day, and just 2% were white collars, 1% were public officials and 3% were self-employed, having own business. Compared to the non-Roma population, the differences are 2-3 times higher.

In direct connection with the present and future situation of the Roma people, the data on education show a very low educational level compared to the general population. For instance, the participation to preschool education was and remained deficient: in 1997-1998, just 17.2% of the Roma children aged 3-6, were enrolled compared to 67%, the national average (Surdu, 2002, p. 106).

UNDP 2011 data show that just little more than one third of the preschool Roma children go to kindergarten (37%), while about two thirds (63%) of the non-Roma children attend preschool education. It is interesting that the rate of participation is slightly higher for girls (by 3-4%), than for boys, both for the Roma and non-Roma children.

UNDP data also show that 21% of the Roma population aged 16 and more is illiterate, which is 10 times more than the corresponding rate for the non-Roma population.

Although the differences decrease in the case of the young population (16-24), they still amount to 17% in the case of the Roma, about 6 times higher than in the non-Roma young. Although the differences in the literacy rates between men and women are not significant (1%), in the Roma, women have a much lower rate compared to men, with differences up to 9% for the population aged 16+ and 5% for the population aged 16-24.

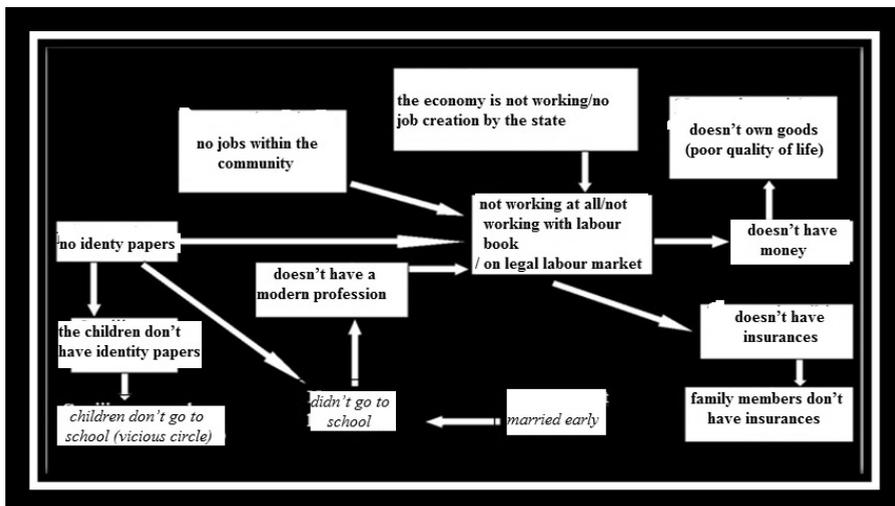
The average number of years of education for the population aged 25-64 is twice higher for the non-Roma, compared to the Roma. Thus, an average 5.45 years of education for the Roma population can only allow employment in unskilled jobs and as daily workers (as also shown by the analysis of the occupations), which means low incomes, therefore poverty / high poverty risk

a. Brief presentation of the sources for Roma exclusion from the labour market

The Roma people belong to the category of vulnerable people, according to MMFPSPV classification in 2011. According to the Framework Law of the social assistance (no. 292/2011), the vulnerable group is defined as “people of families that are at risk of not being able to meet the daily requirement for living due to situations of disease, disability, poverty, drug or alcohol addiction, or other situations that lead to economic and social vulnerability”. In terms of vulnerability, the Roma people are prone to social exclusion.

There are several sources of exclusion of the Roma people from the labour market. As shown in Figure 2, these sources pertain both to the individual (such as, married too early, didn't go to school), and to the external environment (such as, economy not working properly, no job creation by the state).

Figure 2: Sources for Roma exclusion from the labour market



Source: Preda, M., Duminičă, G., Moisă, F., “Young Roma – looking for a job”, p. 20

According to a national document analysis¹, compared to the European situation, one of the causes of the lack of social security mechanisms among the Roma population is “the low participation on the formal labour market, and the high participation on the informal labour market”.

¹ Results of the document analysis. *Social inclusion and poverty control sector* (May 2013), Project co-financed from the European Fund for Regional Development through POAT 2007-2013

„The problem of social exclusion is different from the problem of poverty. It belongs rather to a complex discussion about social stratification. The distinction between the quantitative and qualitative indicators is extremely relevant in this case. The incomes of expenditure of the household, the position on the labour market, education, dwelling, spatial and geographical position, circuits of information, social relations as indicators of the social position, are useful quantitative indicators. (...)”

Source: Fleck, G., Florea, I., Kiss, D., Rughiniş, C. (2008); *Come closer. Inclusion and exclusion of the Roma within the present-day Romanian society*: Bucharest, Human Dynamics, p. 5

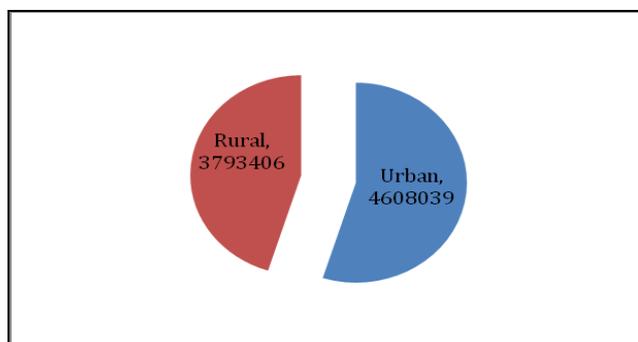
3. Labour force and unemployment

The national rate of activity decreased constantly in the interval 1990-2010, from 87% in 1992, to just 64% in 2010, on the background of the process of reorganization of the national industrial activity.

On the other hand, in the interval 2005-2010, the rate of activity increased to a maximum of 66%, in 2008, returning afterwards to the decreasing trend noticed until 2004, due to the effects of the economic crisis.

Data regarding the occupied population, in the first quarter of 2014, show a national total of 8,401,446 people, of which 55% in the urban and 45% in the rural environment (as shown in Chart 1).

Chart 1: *Occupied population, by age groups, according to the area of residence – 1st quarter 2014 (number of people)*



Source: AMIGO, INS databases

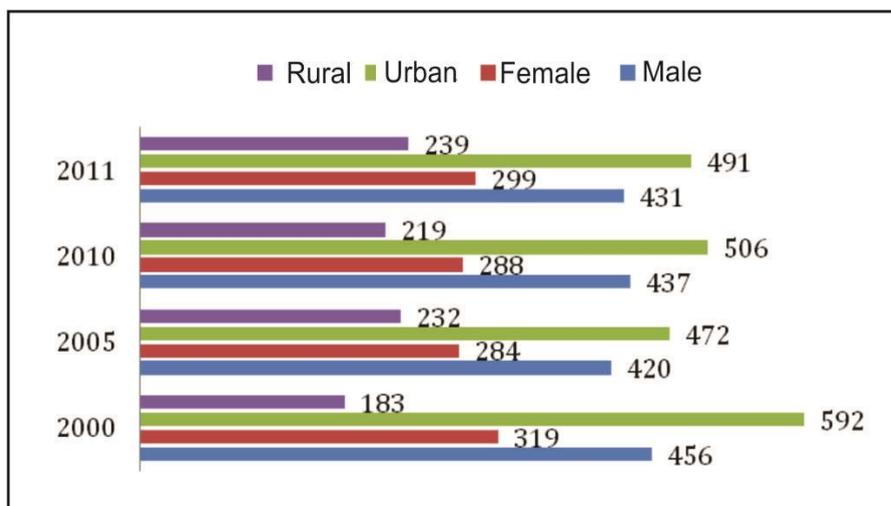
INS data from the 1st quarter 2014 show a total of 9,057,933 people active on the labour market, with significant differences between the male and female genders, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Active population by age group and gender

Age group	Gender	Number of people
	Total	9,057,933
	Male	5,142,611
	Female	3,915,322
15 - 24	Total	630,868
	Male	389,926
	Female	240,942
25 - 34	Total	2,223,058
	Male	1,273,588
	Female	949,470
35 - 49	Total	3,792,615
	Male	2,130,875
	Female	1,661,740
50 - 64	Total	2,074,463
	Male	1,188,908
	Female	885,555

Source: AMIGO, INS databases

The evolution of the national population of unemployed people shows, in Chart 2, a significant increase for the rural population between 2000 and 2011.

Chart 2: Evolution of the national population of unemployed people (thousands people)

Source: <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Statistica%20teritoriala/Statistica%20teritoriala%202013.pdf>

The national unemployment rate was, at the end of September 2014, of 5.11%.¹

UNDP (2011) study is among the few studies showing differences between the Roma and non-Roma populations in terms of participation to the labour market in Romania. According to the data from Table 2, the Roma people run a much higher risk of informal employment.

Table 2: Indicators regarding the participation on the labour market

	Men		Women		Total	
	Roma	Non-Roma	Roma	Non-Roma	Roma	Non-Roma
Employment rate (15-64)	42%	56%	19%	34%	30%	44%
Employment rate (15-24)	32%	38%	10%	13%	22%	24%
Unemployment rate (15-64)	28%	16%	43%	21%	33%	18%
Unemployment rate (15-24)	34%	24%	62%	36%	43%	28%
Activity rate (15-64)	57%	67%	34%	42%	45%	54%
Rate of unemployment experience (15-64)	47%	19%	56%	34%	51%	26%
Rate of unemployment experience (15-24)	70%	50%	75%	80%	73%	64%
Rate of informal employment (15-64)	69%	23%	54%	14%	65%	19%
Rate of informal employment (15-24)	76%	12%	79%	0%	77%	8%

Source: UNDP, 2011

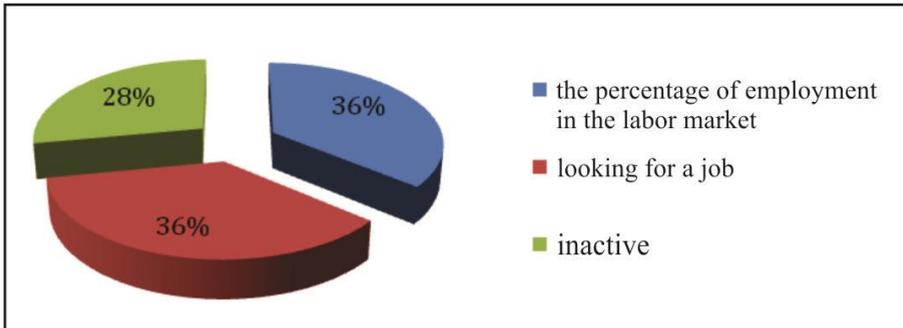
Even though the labour market in Romania is increasing continuously in terms of workforce demand, the situation of the Roma people is rather precarious. This can be due to the low level of qualification of this vulnerable group, result of their low educational training.²

We may speak of an “avalanche” effect: the education influences the level of training, while the latter influences the presence on the labour market and the quality of the jobs performed by the Roma people. In terms of job quality, the Roma people are most often employed on unskilled positions, poorly paid and often informal. Thus, in 2011, just 36% of the people were active on the labour market (as shown in Chart 3).

In terms of genders, women are even less represented on the labour market, just 27%.

¹ Press release 29 September 2014, ANOFM website.

² According to the National Strategy for Workforce Employment, 2014-2020, p.13

Chart 3: Presence of the Roma people on the labour (2011)

Source: Study “Situation of the Roma people from Romania, 2011. Between social inclusion and migration” conducted by the Soros Foundation Romania within project „EU Inclusive. Transfer of data and competencies on the integration of the Roma people into the labour market, between Romania, Bulgaria, Italy and Spain”.

Observing the dynamics of the employment opportunities in the period of reference (see table 3), it seems that the proportion of available jobs, overall Romania, decreased by 66% compared to 2008, in the first year after the financial crisis of 2008.

Table 3: Rate of available jobs a the regional level (%)

Region/ Country	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Romania	2.06	1.94	0.88	0.59	0.64	0.59	0.72
North-West	1.66	1.46	0.54	0.42	0.62	0.55	0.81
Centre	1.9	1.77	0.76	0.5	0.64	0.65	0.67
North-East	2.33	2.33	1.22	1.06	0.92	0.73	0.73
South-East	1.7	1.5	0.57	0.31	0.34	0.42	0.38
South-Muntenia	2.15	1.94	0.86	0.6	0.53	0.5	0.64
Bucharest - Ilfov	2.45	2.47	1.14	0.64	0.74	0.73	0.87
South-West Oltenia	1.66	1.53	0.7	0.46	0.43	0.36	0.37
West	2.28	2.06	1.02	0.7	0.82	0.6	1.06

Source: INSSE, TEMPO database

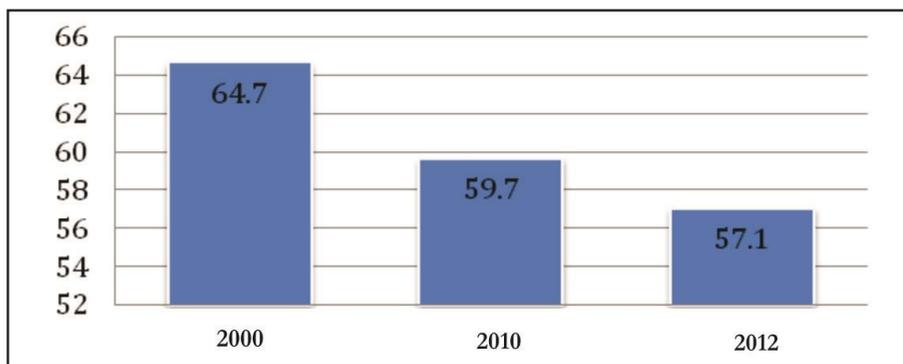
3.1. Workforce and unemployment in South-Muntenia region

Due to the drastic decrease of the birth rate after 1989, the proportion of the workforce within the total population increased. This phenomenon was similar in South-Muntenia region, where the proportion of the workforce increased in the interval 2004-2006, remained rather constant during the following four years, and increased again in 2008-2011.

Thus, in 2011, South-Muntenia region ranked second among the eight regions of development in terms of workforce resources (2,085.6 thousand people), second to North-East region. At the same time, the gender repartition in South-Muntenia region followed the national trends according to which, in 2011, the male workforce was slightly larger than the female workforce, the same situation being noticed in every county within the region of development.

Regarding the employment rate, South-Muntenia region maintained the same decreasing trend observed both in the entire Romania, and in Europe, as shown in Chart 4.

Chart 4: Evolution of the rate of employment in South-Muntenia region



Source: National Strategy for Workforce Employment, 2014-2020, p.17

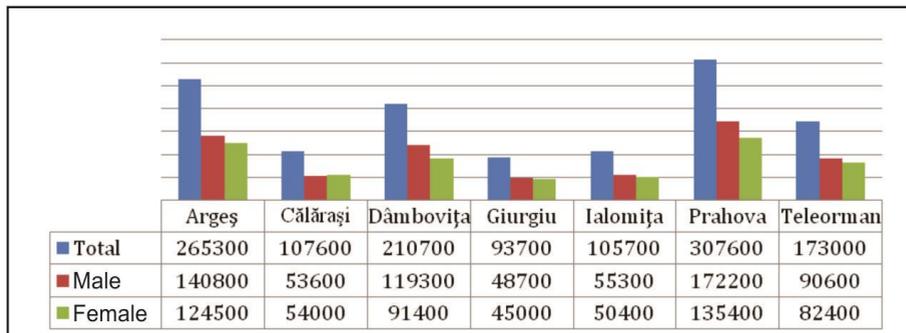
Thus, in 2013, South-Muntenia region ranked sixth among the eight regions of development (56.5%), as shown in Table 4, being much below the national average. The employment rate of the male workforce (58%) was higher than the employment rate of the female workforce (54.9%). Major differences were also noticed between the Counties of Giurgiu and Teleorman.

Table 4: Workforce employment by gender, region of development and county, in 2013 (%)

Region/County	Total	Male	Female
SOUTH-MUNTENIA region	56.5	58	54.9
Argeş	60.1	61.7	58.5
Călăraşi	50.7	47.4	54.4
Dâmboviţa	55.6	60.3	50.6
Giurgiu	49.6	48.9	50.4
Ialomiţa	54.4	53.6	55.3
Prahova	55.3	59.8	50.5
Teleorman	65.7	63.2	68.5

Source: TEMPO, INS databases

Regarding the active population in 2013, in South-Muntenia region there was a total of 1,263.6 thousand active people, of which 680.5 thousand male persons and 583.1 female persons. Their distribution by county can be seen in Chart 5.

Chart 5: Active population – in 2013 (number of people)

Source: TEMPO, INS databases

According to the Socio-Economic Analysis of South-Muntenia region (February 2013)¹, “one may notice that the BIM rate of unemployment during the surveyed period displayed a decreasing trend in the interval 2005-2008, increasing afterwards until 2011 (10.4%) due to the effects of the economic crisis, placing this region on the second place in Romania, much over the national average (7.4%).”

¹ Available online at: http://www.adrmuntenia.ro/imagini/upload/analizasoccepcdr20142020draft3revizuit110213_am_encrypted.pdf

The unemployment rate in South-Muntenia region was 6.7% at the end of July 2014, with the highest unemployment rate in Giurgiu County, 7.6%, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Unemployment rate in July 2014, in South-Muntenia region (by county), %

SOUTH-MUNTENIA region	6.7
Argeş	5.6
Călăraşi	7.3
Dâmboviţa	7.3
Giurgiu	7.6
Ialomiţa	6.9
Prahova	4.8
Teleorman	10.4

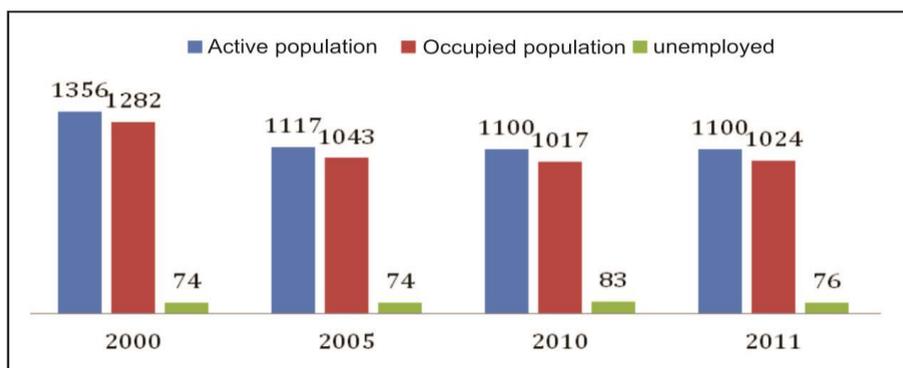
Source: ANOFM website data

According to a press release of ANOFM, some counties from South-Muntenia region have higher unemployment rates than the other counties composing Romania. Thus, at the end of September, within the classification of all the counties of Romania in terms of unemployment, Teleorman ranked second, Dâmboviţa ranked eighth and Giurgiu ranked tenth.

3.2. Workforce and unemployment in South-West Oltenia region

Chart 6 and Table 6 show the evolution of the population from South-West Oltenia region depending on their participation at the economic activity. According to these data, no significant fluctuation is noticed for the period 2005-2011. However, differences can be noticed in terms of the active and occupied population, both by gender and by area of residence.

Chart 6: Total population of South-West Oltenia region (thousand people)



Source: <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Statistica%20teritoriala/Statistica%20teritoriala%202013.pdf>

Table 6: Total population of South-West Oltenia region, depending on their participation at the economic activity, by gender and by area of residence (thousand people)

	Active population				Occupied population			
	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Urban	Rural
2000	709	647	490	866	666	616	427	855
2005	608	509	496	621	566	477	443	600
2010	611	489	488	312	554	463	433	584
2011	609	491	502	598	558	466	454	570

Source: <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Statistica%20teritoriala/Statistica%20teritoriala%202013.pdf>

In 2013, in South-West Oltenia region, there was a total of 911,100 active people, of which 53.2% male and 46.8% female. Table 7 shows their gender distribution by county.

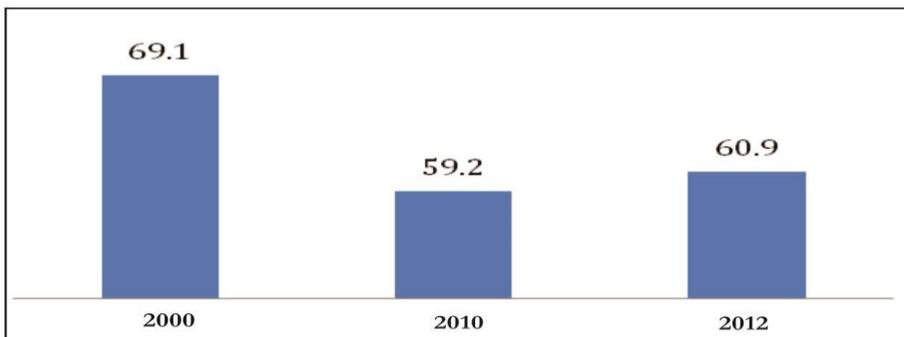
Table 7. Active population by gender, region of development and county, in 2013 (thousand people)

Region/country	Total	Male	Female
SOUTH-WEST OLTENIA region	911.1	485.4	425.7
Dolj	290.9	153.7	137.2
Gorj	146.4	80.3	66.1
Mehedinți	117.6	61.9	55.7
Olt	178	91.5	86.5
Vâlcea	178.2	98	80.2

Source: TEMPO, INS databases

The workforce employment rate in South-West Oltenia region maintained the same decreasing trend displayed both in overall Romania, and in Europe, as shown in Chart 7.

Chart 7: Evolution of the employment rate in South-West Oltenia region



Source: National Strategy for Workforce Employment, 2014-2020, p.17

In 2013, in South-West Oltenia region, the employment rate was of 58.1%, with a difference of just 1.7% between the male and female gender (Table 8).

Table 8: Workforce employment rate by gender, region of development and county in 2013, %

Region/county	Total	Male	Female
SOUTH-WEST OLTENIA region	58.1	58.9	57.2
Dolj	58.7	59.6	57.7
Gorj	53.4	56.1	50.5
Mehedinți	56.4	55.5	57.4
Olt	55.9	53.8	58.3
Vâlcea	65.6	69.1	61.8

Source: TEMPO, INS databases

At the regional level, on the background of the general decrease of the rate of activity, the unemployment rate increased in 2005-2010 in South-West Oltenia region (Table 9).

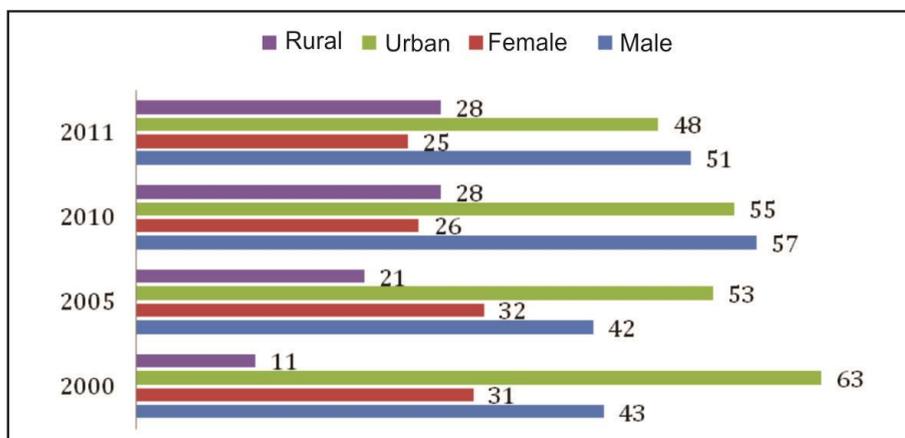
Table 9: Evolution of the unemployment rate in South-West Oltenia region, in 2005-2010

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total (per region)	6.6%	7.1%	6.8%	6.5%	6.8%	7.5%
Male	6.9%	8.6%	7.9%	8%	8.5%	9.3%
Female	6.2%	5.3%	5.5%	4.6%	4.7%	5.4%

Source: INS official website

The evolution of the total unemployed population shows, as seen in Chart 8, significant increases for the rural population, in 2000-2011.

Chart 8: Evolution of the total unemployed population – South-West Oltenia region (thousand people)



Source: <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Statistica%20teritoriala/Statistica%20teritoriala%202013.pdf>

The unemployment rate at the end of July 2014 was 7.9% in South-West Oltenia region, the highest rate being recorded in Mehedinți County (9.9%), as seen in Table 10.

Table 10: Unemployment rate at the end of July 2014 in South-West Oltenia region, by county, %

SOUTH-WEST OLTENIA region	7.9
Dolj	8.7
Gorj	7.8
Mehedinți	9.9
Olt	7.8
Vâlcea	5.5

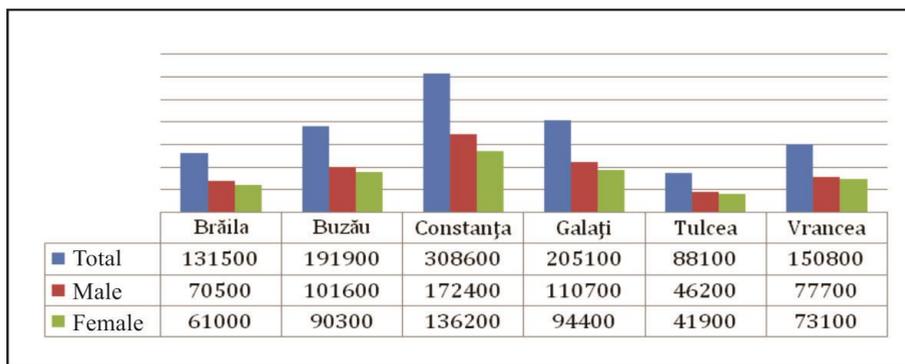
Source: ANOFM website data

According to ANOFM press release, in South-West Oltenia region there are some counties with high unemployment rates. Thus, at the end of September 2014, compared to the other counties from Romania, Mehedinți ranked third, Dolj ranked sixth, Olt ranked seventh, and Gorj ranked ninth.

3.3. Workforce and unemployment in South-East region

The region of development South-East, “has an occupational structure that requires additional investments and specific policies so that the evolution in this region complies with the national objectives assumed within Europe 2020 Strategy.” (Albu coord. 2001: p. 52). Thus, in 2013, in South-East region, there were 1,076,000 people active on the labour market, of which 579,000 male and 496,900 female persons. Chart 9 shows their distribution by county and gender.

Chart 9: Active population –2013- number of people



Source: TEMPO, INS databases

Concerning the dynamics of the employment opportunities in the period of reference (Table 3), one may notice that the proportion of available jobs decreased by 66% compared to 2008. South-East region had values below the national average throughout the entire period 2007-2013.

According to the unemployment rate calculated by TEMPO database for July 2014, South-East region (6.3%) has a higher unemployment rate than the national average, the highest unemployment rates being recorded in the Counties of Buzău and Galați (9.1%), as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Unemployment rate in July 2014, South-East region, by county, %

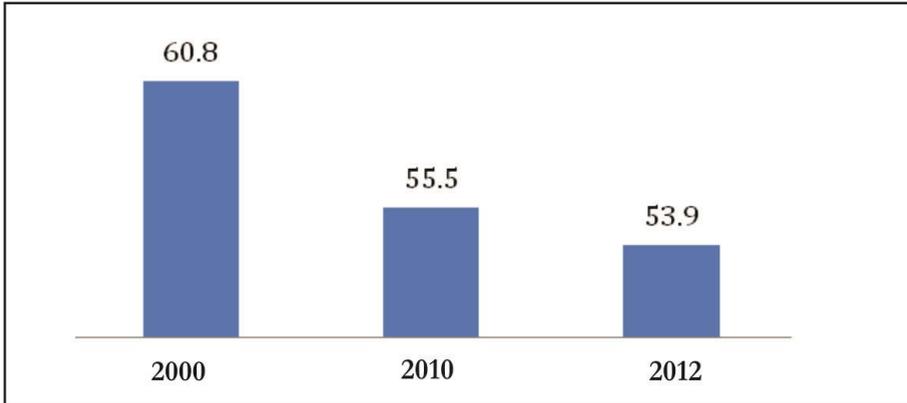
SOUTH-EAST region	6.3
Brăila	6.7
Buzău	9.1
Constanța	3.1
Galați	9.1
Tulcea	5
Vrancea	5.9

Source: ANOFM website data

According to ANOFM press release, at the end of September, one of the counties composing the South-East region, Buzău County ranked fourth among the counties with the highest unemployment rates in Romania.

The evolution of the employment rate in South-East region maintained the same decreasing trend observed both in Romania and Europe, as shown in Chart 10.

Chart 10: Evolution of the employment rate in South-East region



Source: National Strategy for Workforce Employment, 2014-2020:17

In 2013, the employment rate in South-East region was 54.5%, with a difference of 3.6 percent points between the male and female persons. Table 12 shows the distribution of percentages by county and gender.

Table 12: Workforce employment rate by gender, region of development and county, in 2013, %

SOUTH-EAST region	54.5	56.2	52.6
Brăila	53.1	54.1	52.1
Buzău	59.1	58.8	59.4
Constanța	60.1	66.4	53.5
Galați	45.2	46.4	44
Tulcea	51	50.4	51.8
Vrancea	56.7	55.6	57.9

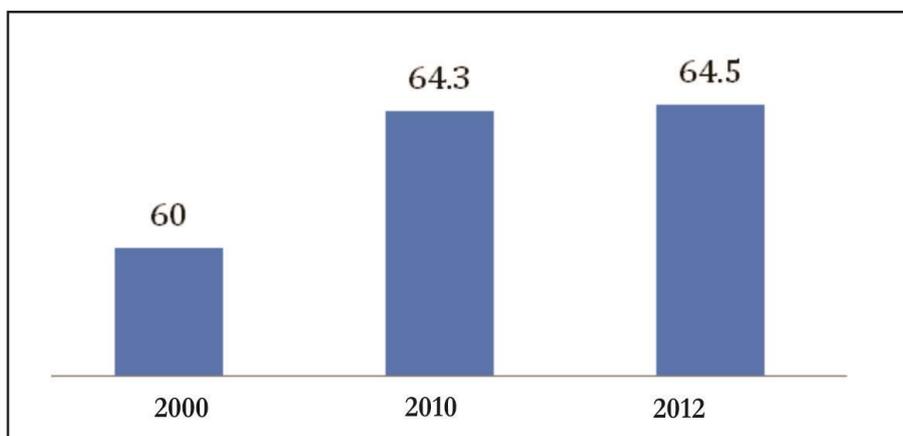
Source: TEMPO, INS databases

3.4. Workforce and unemployment in Bucharest-Ilfov region

Bucharest-Ilfov region is the most important region of development in Romania, displaying the highest employment rates for the active population, and a lower unemployment rate. Despite these positive indicators, the region still needs improvements in terms of employment and of Roma people inclusion on the labour market.

Bucharest-Ilfov region is the only region where the employment rate of the workforce displayed an increasing trend, as shown in Chart 11.

Chart 11: Evolution of the employment rate in Bucharest-Ilfov region



Source: National Strategy for Workforce Employment, 2014-2020:17

In 2013, Bucharest-Ilfov region had an employment rate of 82.1%, with a difference of 3.1% between the male and female persons (as shown in Table 13).

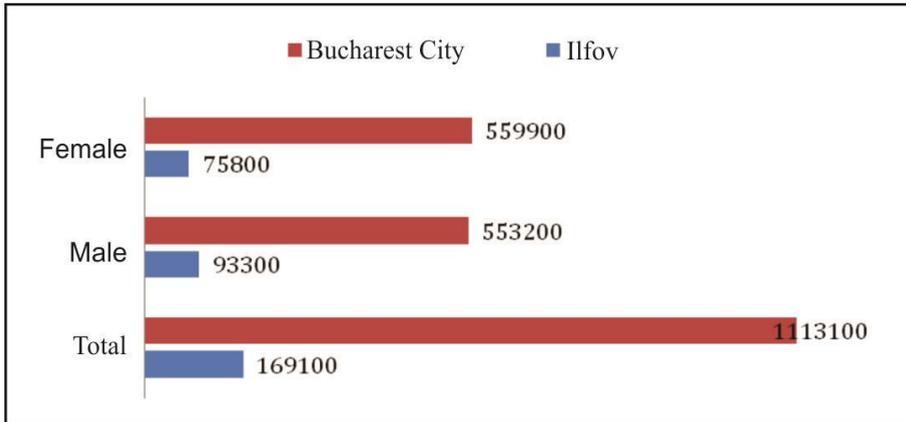
Table 13: Workforce employment rate by gender, region of development and county, in 2013, %

	Total	Male	Female
BUCHAREST-ILFOV region	82.1	83.7	80.6
Ilfov	66	71.3	60.5
Bucharest City	85.3	86.2	84.4

Source: TEMPO, INS databases

According to PDRBI, it is important to mention “in terms of the age structure of the population, the high proportion – 68.47% at the 2011 Census – of the people aged 20-64, which provides most of the active population”. In 2013, there were 1,282,200 active people, of which 646,500 male and 635,700 female persons. Chart 12 shows their distribution in Ilfov County and Bucharest City.

Chart 12: Active population in 2013, number of people



Source: TEMPO, INS databases

The unemployment rate at the end of July 2014 was 2% in Bucharest-Ilfov region, with small differences between Ilfov County and Bucharest City, as shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Unemployment rate in July 2014, Bucharest-Ilfov region, by county, %

BUCHAREST-ILFOV REGION	2
ILFOV	1.6
BUCHAREST CITY	2

Source: ANOFM website data

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Even though the issue of the Roma people (particularly with impact on the inclusion on the labour market) has been approached in various specific papers, policies, programs and projects promoted both in Romania and in Europe, the social exclusion,

marginalization and discrimination of the Roma population are current realities, and the mechanisms that produce them are far from being suppressed. Several programs and projects aimed to support the inclusion and absorption into the labour market of, as many as possible, Roma people. However, the survey of workforce employment among the Roma people living in Romania, and the analysis of the implications of their traditional crafts as opposed to the modern professions, proved to be insignificant and inconsistent. At the European level, the situation of this minority became a concern both in terms of knowledge and understanding, and in terms of measures actually taken to provide solutions to the needs of inclusion, among which their access to the labour market and improved employment rate.

The situation of the Roma people is a subject of interest for all media (political, economic and social), turning into a subject on the working agenda of the actors involved in the elaboration of the support policies for the Roma population.

It is known that the cultural patterns and the social behaviours, their traditions are essential elements for the Roma population, defining it as social group. Within a society and economy displaying a fast dynamics, in which mechanization, technologization and computerization devalue the significance of the traditions and of the traditional crafts, the Roma perceive these phenomena of modernity as an aggression which depreciates their cultural identity.

The inclusion on the labour market of the people belonging to vulnerable groups, among which the Roma people, produces multiple effects and real benefits because, for one, they cut the cost of the social protection measures, while eliminating the dependency on this type of protection. The positive effects of such sustainable inclusion would be noticed both at the individual, and at the societal level, and would contribute to the economic and social development.

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SOCIAL ECONOMY – CHALLENGES OF AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Victor NICOLĂESCU¹

***Abstract:** The social economy highlights the potential to ensure an adequate level of social inclusion for persons belonging to vulnerable groups, meaning that this sector has received increased attention in the last decade. In this article are exposed the main ideas that the social economy has recorded a series of definitions in an attempt to ensure the identity of the conceptual and applied as complete. Also, a scan of the stage of development of the social economy in Romania opens interrogative approaches by which to provide answers to major challenges and threats outlined in this field. Although we face an obvious positive dynamics of last realization of an argued in this area and it appears that remain a number of issues to be clarified in future in terms of strengthening the social economy sector.*

***Keywords:** social economy; social inclusion; civil society; vulnerable groups; development*

1. Introduction

Currently, the social economy has become a key area in Romania from the perspective that there were two waves successive substantial financing initiatives for social economy by SOPHRD (Sectoral Operational Program of Human Resources Development) and from the perspective that was adopted in 2015 a legislative framework clearly delineating the sector in terms of social interventions.

The current state of social development in Romania shows a conceptual clarification endorsed by regulators and implemented by specialists, quantifying and mapping the structures of social economy, an adequate level of research at scientific level well-articulated and carried out in-depth level, development of training resources in the sector and a multitude of initiatives that have emerged in the last six years. However, without downplay achievements, the level of expectation to value the potential of social economy is high both in the practitioners in the field, and donors aimed at carefully to ensure a sustainable level of functioning structures of social economy.

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2. Social Economy – looking for specific interventions and identity in socio-economic plan

The social economy is a field reference in contemporary societies given the growing importance to address in an integrated manner the social inclusion of the persons belonging to vulnerable groups. The Europe 2020 Strategy, approved in March 2010 by the European Council is a new strategy for jobs and growth based on strengthening and better coordinating economic and social policies based on clear objectives established according to the following priorities (COM, 2010) :

- smart growth - ‘strengthening knowledge and innovation as drivers of our future growth’;
- sustainable growth - ‘promote more resource efficient, greener and a more competitive economy’;
- inclusive growth (for the first time this term is used in official documents Europe) - ‘creating an economy with a high level of employment, ensuring social and territorial cohesion’, ‘empowering people through high employment, investing in increasing the skills, fighting poverty and modernizing labor market, training and social protection, supporting citizens in managing and anticipating change and building an inclusive society’.

From the perspective of creating an own identity it is important to emphasize that the social economy is defined by conceptual and practical approaches, which distinguishes sense to define a boundary in this area (Demoustier, D., 2004):

a. as a concept, the social economy was launched in the nineteenth century and was faced with a number of adaptations:

- whether a consolidation of political economy - the production of means of existence beyond the material production, the liberals (as Charles Dunoyer, in 1830, who provided the launch of another author in 1848 - John Stuart Mill) ;
- either as a substitute for the critical political economy (by Christians and socialists such as Auguste Ott, 1851);
- whether to integrate a form of political economy (Proudhon);
- either as a complement to economic trends in which were increasing public savings (Walras 1896; Gide, 1912);

b. as a set of practices and institutions, the social economy was gradually released theories developed by economists, and by the employers' structures, to define gradually through the economic association. Thus, the rediscovery of the social economy in the twentieth century is marked by increased autonomy of collective private organizations in relation to their integration into public intervention as particular forms of non-capitalist companies, in contrast to the mistrust and selectivity imposed by competition and conditional funding.

In a more diversified formula, it is recognizing the social economy sector from the perspective of four components (Nicolăescu et al., 2011, 13-24): conceptual component (drafting definitions and typologies); normative component (adoption of new legislative initiatives at European and national level); institutional component (the spreading of representative structures that promote, develop and monitor specific policies); academic component (aggregate formation scientific resources, evidence-based).

In Romania, the social economy is accepted as ‘the type of economy that combines effectively the responsibility of the individual to the collective to produce goods and / or providing services, which seeks economic and social development of a community and whose main purpose is social benefit. ES is based on a private initiative, voluntary and solidarity, with a high degree of autonomy and responsibility which, assume a financial risk and limited profit distribution’ (Stanescu et al., 2012: 13).

3. Recent developments in the social economy sector in Romania

At European level, the social economy has a significant impact: contribute to effective competition on the market; offers potential for creating jobs, the employment and new forms of entrepreneurship; it is largely based on membership activity based on meeting new needs; promotes citizen participation and volunteering; strengthens solidarity and cohesion; helps to integrate the economies of the candidate countries (Myers, 2009: 36).

According to the Research Report on the Social Economy in Romania from a European perspective compared to what was done within the project ‘Social Economy - Model innovative active inclusion of disadvantaged people,’ social economy can operate under the following forms (MMFPS, 2010: 16 -17):

- Voluntary Organisations (often linked to a religious cult and provide services);
- Self-help groups of citizens (refer to new ways of working and social inclusion depending on the availability of local resources);
- public social structures (incubators);
- organizational cooperative (community enterprises that promote community interest in specific groups);
- new forms of nonprofit organizations (involved in providing public services and commercial activities to fund the services provided);
- charitable foundations, associations and foundations (which have commercial entities that aim to contribute to raising revenue for public benefits).

Despite the fact that we want a better framed as social economy sector, it is considered that the social economy includes all organizations located between the public and private sector in terms of organization, operation and declared principles (Pîrvu et al., 2009: 53). In this respect, Romania, in 2008 there were 27 319 active organizations that refers to a variety of forms associating non-profits, associations, unions, cooperatives (Lambru et al.,

2011: 104). According to recent data from the balance sheets for the activity carried out in 2010 indicated a number of 29.226 the social economy entities (NGOs 26.332 - including agricultural associations and communities concerning cooperatives 2,017 and unions 887) which recorded a total of 116 379 employees (Petrescu et al., 2013: 60-61). The civil society in Romania stands third sector renaissance or 'third sector', indicating that a history of association observed in Romanian culture (Chipea et al., 2010: 93). A full picture of the social economy entities in Romania is found in the Social Economy Romania Atlas 2012 (Constantinescu, 2012; Barna, 2014).

Clearly, social economy initiatives relate to specific local communities where they occur, providing solutions through activation and usage of local forces (Cace S., V. Nicolaescu, Scoican A., 2010: 29). Moreover, local intervention is required to be built to increase the welfare of the community members and this is reflected in the services received, integration into the labor market and avoid the negative effects of processes of growth among vulnerable people (Petrescu et al . 2012: 358).

In Romania, after a relatively long period of analysis, debates, legislative proposals, of Law no. 219/2015 on social economy brings some clarifications necessary to assure the adequate functioning of this sector:

- definition of social economy as representing all activities organized independently by the public sector, whose purpose is to serve the general interest and the interests of a community and / or personal interests patrimonial through increased employment of persons belonging to the vulnerable group and / or production and provision of goods, services and / or works;
- establishing the principles underlying the social economy and its objectives;
- definition of significant terms in the social economy and the categorization of persons belonging to the vulnerable group;
- definition of the term 'social enterprise' and granting a certificate in social economy for businesses operating in the field;
- definition of 'social insertion enterprise' certification status and social insertion enterprise by providing social brand based on the fulfillment of specific criteria;
- creating the mechanisms to support and encourage development of social enterprises;
- establishment of national records of the Register of unique social enterprises;
- establishing that May Month will be dedicated to the organization of various events or actions of publicizing the social economy named 'month to promote the social economy'.

However, in this normative act reference, there are many points that remain to be implemented into practice by adopting the secondary legislation, and then we can have a clear output of this regulating approach regarding the social economy.

4. Challenges to strengthen social economy

Starting from the reality recorded in most countries it is estimated that social economy organizations still face many obstacles and so is necessary to support the following areas (Ziomas et al., 2012: 68): favorable legal and institutional framework; alternative financial instruments and institutions; quality assurance products and services; improving skills and qualifications; administrative support and specialized expertise; developing networks and partnerships; development and implementation of government support schemes.

From the perspective of the challenges in the social economy, it is highlighted a number of distinct aspects (Leviten-Reid E., Torjman, 2006: 6-8):

- Initiatives are diverse and evolving;
- Different types of results are pursued simultaneously;
- Attention results should be balanced by attention process;
- Objectives are typically fixed term, but should be provided signs of progress in the medium term;
- Different types or levels of results are concerned by initiatives that are new and emerging or mature and expanding, and by the existence of political support and adequate infrastructure;
- Quantitative and qualitative data are needed to identify the many facets of these initiatives and to meet the needs of information requested by various key community stakeholders;
- Broader necessary time, energy and resources;
- Key results such as building community capacity, supported and prepared absence of measures leading to some quantification;
- Holistic nature of social economy initiatives can lead to a wide range of outcomes that are assigned to other initiatives;
- Certain initiatives may require technical assistance to design and build a proper assessment;
- Practitioners can perceive as marginalized in the process of assessment that prioritizes the needs of donors to the detriment intent responsibility practitioners to learn and improve their work.

From the perspective of opportunities identified in the social economy sector is circulated various development scenarios:

- achieving an effective level of social economy through three defining characteristics (Social Finance, 2010: 17-22):
 - a) diversity of providers;

- b) discipline pellets that reward providers;
- c) the availability of investment that gives service providers the opportunity to develop and grow.
- existence of consolidated records that the social economy represents an important and growing contributor to the entire economy of Europe (Evans & Syrett, 2007: 60).
- goods and services produced in the social economy emphasizes the social dimension of economic activity by (Guide de l'entreprise d'Analyse d'économie social, 2003: A3):
 - a) the social utility of goods and services, especially for interested community;
 - b) complementary goods and services produced by the public and private sectors;
 - c) the relationship between economic activities and local development;
 - d) economic and social impact at community level and territorial level.

From the perspective of increasing threats in the evolution of the social economy sector and strengthen initiatives that best practices can include different points of view:

- lack of cooperation between the private and public sector which can exacerbate problems of a particular community or region (Hosu, 2012: 112);
- existence of a competitive economic environment where supplies for the existence of a business, including a social business;
- lack of a uniform legal framework at European level to boost that uniform national regulation of social enterprises.

5. Conclusions

Given that there are many uncertainties and unclear aspects in ensuring the continuity of social economy structures, proactive approach to functional aspects, it is necessary to simultaneously pursue at least four crucial to clarify the positive evolution of the social economy:

1. Ensuring the necessary human resources interventions (Cace, et al., 2012a);
2. Ensuring social economy financing activities (Nicolăescu et al., 2012a; Nicolaescu V. et al., 2012b);
3. Ensuring involvement from groups targeted interventions (Popescu, 2011; Cace C., 2012b);
4. Follow up a business plan and updating social development plan.

In the context of a major emphasis for the implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy, which is associated with defining social economy as a serious partner civil society and

the State (E. Zamfir, Fitzek S. 2010: 8) it becomes acute the need to monitor and assess initiatives undertaken in this sector (Nicolăescu, 2012) and to provide security features in charting a future predictable for specific initiatives social economy so that activities and programs undertaken to bring his contribution to the aspirations of economic and social assumed this form of economy (Stanescu, 2013: 60).

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CUSTOMER ATTITUDES TOWARDS BUYING E-BOOKS: PERSPECTIVES FROM A ROMANIAN PUBLISHING HOUSE

Vlad ROȘCA¹

***Abstract:** The research is built around one single survey question that lies at its core, namely whether the prospects of a public sector publishing house would like to buy and download books directly from the house's website. Results indicate a strong modification of customer behavior within the boundaries of a digitalized economy. At least on paper, "brick-and-mortar" goods seem to loose their pace, whereas intelligent devices open new consumption opportunities. Such aspects are being presented in the first part of the research, which also attempts to present a definition of e-books, for better understanding the Methodology and Results section. This former one looks at the survey itself, whereas the paper concludes with a Discussions section that tries to establish a link to the third sector of the economy and, finally, presents the limitations of the article.*

***Keywords:** e-commerce; public sector; books; social economy*

Introduction

With the accelerated digitalization of the world, increasingly more facets of life are being handled over the Internet, from issues such as keeping in touch with friends up to checking bank accounts or booking a table in a restaurant (Drămnescu, Stavre, 2015; Innopay, 2012; Tello et al., 2012). Given the circumstances, the landscape of buying is redefined, with the Internet gaining importance in purchase decisions thanks to a high number of connected devices (Ionescu, Diaconu, 2015). Products are now flowing directly into the lives of consumers, who do not have to make the effort anymore to get out of their homes and go to a shop. Many customers already turn to e-commerce, with online stores occupying a hot spot in the modern business environment (Koo, Ju,

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2010). In 2011, the worldwide volume of e-commerce extended to 680 billion US Dollar, a 19% increase year-over-year (Innopay, 2012).

There is no wonder that a large part of trade is now to be found online. E-commerce, defined from a business-to-consumer perspective, is seen as the transaction of products through electronic channels (Grandon, Pearson, 2004). Paid for online, products can be distributed through two channels: still online, if the product has got an electronic form, or offline, if the product has got tangible properties.

On the other hand side, studies also regard e-commerce as a business operation, coordinated by company employees (Molla, Licker, 2004). E-commerce has been told to be particularly alluring for smaller businesses trailing behind market leaders, as it could provide marketing advantages. Adopting new technology allows businesses to open up to clients far removed in space. Acces to a larger clientele is related to the possibility of increased sales, one of the main drivers for businesses to trade online. Improved sales opportunities can, at their turn, improve revenues and reestablish competitiveness.

In what concerns customers, opinions are split between adopters, late-adopters and non-adopters. Adopters are eager to purchase online thanks to a range of advantages they can benefit from. Online commerce offers great time- and cost-savings (Szymanski, Hise, 2000): the search for information, the comparison of products, as well as the placement of the order, amongst others, are easier to make. Most of all, however, purchasing online implies the home-delivery of the ordered goods, which spares the client from travelling to the retailer's brick and mortar shop to pick up the product. Convenience, hence, is seen as a quality of e-commerce.

Late-adopters hold back in doubt when it comes to purchase from the internet because of issues concerning security, privacy and industriousness (McKnight et al., 2002). It is the perceptions customers have about these issues that transform the former ones in late-adopters or non-adopters – people who haven't let themselves persuaded by the instigation to buy online.

E-Commerce of books

A research done by Gefen (2000) through the e-commerce establishment shows that books and CD's are the most sought-after products online. The author attributes a major role of this development to retailing websites such as Amazon and eBay, which serve millions of customers overall the world. The improvement of the webspace has modified retailing habits and has directed the bookstores' industry to undergo an electronic transformation (Jiang, Katsamakos, 2010). Books are one of the most suitable products to sell online, thanks to some characteristics such as:

- No pre-purchase testing is needed as with other technological goods, like cars, for example;
- Easy transportation and fast delivery;

- The risk of damaging while being delivered is low, as compared, for example, with technological goods;
- Books are easy to return to the seller if there are any problems with the item.

Hence, many e-bookstores have emerged after the dot-com bubble in 2002. Next to the web, another factor that encourages the online purchase of books is globalization. As readers want to buy foreign authors and read the book in a particular foreign language, customers have now got the opportunity to make international purchases. Books from all over the world can be bought. With such changes in mind, an important share of book sales is now driven by e-commerce (Lubiana, Gammon, 2004).

According to Muthitachoen et al. (2006), two types of retailing models are possible. One of them is the pure Internet store, where online is the only sales channel, while the other one is a hybrid store that combines multiple sales channels. These two types of online retailing gain importance in the book selling business nowadays, adding to the third, classical type of offline retailing. Hybrid models are also known as omnichannel retailing, which refers to combining digital and physical selling and buying experiences. These hybrid models are described as „bricks-and-clicks” stores, with bricks standing for offline activities and clicks for online activities (Lee et al., 2011).

Most of the important publishers on the Romanian book retailing market, such as Humanitas, RAO, All, Curtea Veche, or Paralela 45, have added an online division to their already well established offline business. The brand capital built in the offline market previous to the digital revolution of the recent years was transferred to the online market. Publishers offer their clients the possibility to buy both offline and online. Publishers selling online have a more direct approach to costumers than „brick-and-mortar” bookstores. In an online store, a publisher sells only its own books, not needing any intermediary bookstores. On the contrary, a bookstore, offline or online, sells books of different publishers. Now that online retailing gives the costumers the possibility to make purchases from wherever they are, without having to visit the premises of a store, costumers tend to buy directly from publishers, as the items sold are cheaper, with the profit margins usually added by bookstores being deducted. In such a case, online bookstores will have to cope with a strong competition not only from other bookstores, but also from publishers that entered the online retailing business.

E-books

Given the existing opportunities, book publishers took up electronic retailing and set an even larger footprint on the market for information and knowledge. Part of the retail activity bookstores once did is now in direct control of the publishers themselves.

Electronic retailing done by publishers has got two components. One of them consists of selling hardcopy (or paperback) books that can be ordered online and delivered via post, without losing their tangibility. The other one consists of e-books, which are digital copies of the hardcopy books that are sent to electronic devices through which consumers can read them, such as PC's or PDA's like tablets or smartphones

(Kang et al., 2009). According to Kang et al. (2009), e-books provide the same meaning and incremental value as hardcopy books do: offering information that can be transformed in meaning through the process of reading. In fact, most printed books also have an e-version. The most evident difference between hardcopies and e-books lies in the format: while the former books are printed on paper, the latter ones are electronically saved in formats such as .pdf, .chm., .lrx or .epub. In marketing terms, differences may be found in product features such as storage, transfer, or accessibility. E-books are easier to store (no physical space is needed, as books are saved virtually on electronic devices), can be faster transferred between users (through e-mail, for example), and provide greater accessibility (anytime and anywhere if the consumer has an e-reader next to him or her).

Methodology and Results

Increasingly more specifically designed devices for e-reading are produced worldwide, opening new reading possibilities (Siegenthaler et al., 2011). Not only customers may profit from a wider array of titles where to choose from, but also bookstores and publishing houses may find it easier to sell their products. The purpose of this survey was to find out whether customers of Editura ASE, mainly bachelor, master and PhD students, as well as professors, would be ready to buy e-books. Editura ASE is the academic publishing house of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies; its printing activities date back to the year 1913, when the House first started publishing the lectures that professors held at the newly founded university.

For each printed book, there is also its e-book, an Adobe PDF document. As books are edited by the publishing house in Microsoft Word, the final, ready-to-print version is saved as a PDF document, which then goes to print, but, in the same time, stays available in the database of the house.

It was this database of available PDF e-books that motivated Editura ASE to launch an inquiry in order to find out whether there is a market for buying the electronic versions (instead of the printed ones), which would reduce the operating costs due to paperback printing of the publishing house.

In this sense, e-books were presented to the respondents as books adapted for computers, laptops, e-readers or PC-tablets. The survey consisted of one single question, displayed on the website of the publishing house in the year 2013. The question asked participants whether they would like to buy and download the books edited under the trademark of Editura ASE directly from latter one's website. Three possible answers were given to choose from: "Yes", "No, I'd rather read paperback editions", and "No, because I do not want to use my EC card for online payments".

There have been 297 respondents to the questions. Of those, 89,90% (267 votes) mentioned that, yes, they would be ready to buy books in an electronic format. 7,74% (23 votes) mentioned that they wouldn't buy e-books because they'd rather have the paperback edition, while 2,36% (7 votes) stated that they wouldn't like to use their EC card for online purchases.

Discussions

The previously mentioned one question-survey is closely linked to what one can call a social economy approach. Offering both hardcopy and softcopy solutions actually does nothing else than to reinforce the decision making of prospects, who are free to decide by themselves whichever of the two solutions better fits their needs. A focus is set on the benefit of people, this being one of the pillars of a social economy (Neguț, 2014).

In times of change to a digital economy, part of a world that witnesses revolutionary transformations (Cace et al., 2011; Enăchescu et al., 2011; Militello, Gujarado, 2013), the publishing house has brought upfront the idea of selling books in electronic format. The idea was validated by the answers, which demonstrate that the vision of the editors converges with the views of the readers. A market for e-books is being formed for the people to satisfy their consumption needs (Firat et al., 2013) whereby consumer behavior is shaped by social determinants. In an era that goes digital, people also want to consume online. The reading behavior of people is an important piece of information for the organizations on the market (Călin, Cernat, 2015). Having and using such pieces of information might help in reducing failures of communication (Smarandache, Vlăduțescu, 2014).

The results of the survey show that 90% of the respondents are ready to buy e-books, and the percentage could be even higher considering that the people who have answered „No” indicated that they actually did not want to make purchases with their EC card, not necessarily that they would not like to read ebooks.

By presenting the e-book possibility, the ASE publishing house, an organization affiliated to a public sector institution, shows its propensity to contributing to both increasing the value of services brought to the members of the academic community, as well as to a more resource-friendly activity.

The survey was just one step made in an economy that may change heavily over the coming decades. Generally speaking, if consumers are ready to buy the softcopies of the traditional „brick-and-mortar” goods, a contribution can be made to a more resource-friendly environment in line with positive ecologist practices, where time and material used can be optimized thanks to innovative solutions in order to protect a resource-limited environment (Stanciu, 2012). The market sector has still got place for improvement and the future is to decide how the e-book environment is going to look like. If the mentalities of people can be changed towards buying e-books, then this can contribute to a more socially responsible, ethical-based organizational activity, aim which economists encourage in order to diminish resource spend (Bușoi, 2014; Bușoi, 2015).

In the end, even if this research has attempted to present and discuss the results of a market survey, the paper has its limitations, which also need to be presented. First and foremost, one can think about the fragility of the research, which lies in the fact that it only discusses one question with three answers. Hence, the methodology chosen has been as simple as possible, leaving enough spaces for counter-opinions. A more interesting view might have existed if the research consisted in more topic-related questions, which would have permitted broader analyses. At the same time, further

details are needed to enforce the assumptions made and the conclusions drawn. Future research might therefore want to concentrate on real market data about how the shift from paperback to softcopy is being made amongst bookstores and libraries.

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Book review

SIMONA MARIA STĂNESCU, SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION – A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS, 2014, BUCHAREST: PRO UNIVERSITARIA

Victor NICOLĂESCU¹

Strengthening the social security system in the European Union is a top issue in the context of a post-crisis period which affected largely the Member States. From this perspective, from an essential idea to identify common points that can build a space of welfare at European level, the emergence of a work that analyzes in depth the differences between the founding states, old countries and new Member States is an original approach that is framed by changes vectors expected by Europeans citizens (Cace et al, 2011; Cace et al., 2012). Making a comparative analysis at European level represents a documentary and statistical incursion which involve perseverance in to capture aspects and details that can offer appropriate solutions for modern systems of social protection at European level.

The book '**Social Protection in the European Union – A Comparative Analysis**', published in Bucharest (ProUniversitaria, 2015, 198 pp.), is authored by Simona Maria Stănescu – researcher and doctor in sociology which gives a rigorous and systematic methodological framework by the expertise she has acquired within the Research Institute for Quality of Life, and by her coordination and implementation of many projects. Furthermore, the vector paper is still highlighted in the introduction by the author, by mentioning the continuity of treating specific aspects of social protection: 'Continuous improvement of social protection coordination within the European Union (EU) towards providing a decent quality of life for all is supported by monitoring the national performances of the member-states alongside adjustments brought to the negotiation process with candidate countries' (p. 15).

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The structure is organized into four parts through which the progressive approach of the European framework structured until to EU accession of Croatia: the first part addresses the process during relatively recent accession countries of the fifth wave to the European Union, indicating the significant benchmarks in the history of the past two decades, the route plan assimilating the *acquis communautaire* to become a member state, but also in the sphere of institutional harmonization so necessary in the social field.

In the second paper - *Answers of European Union to Demographic Challenges*, is highlight the qualities of authentic researcher of the author through very detailed population dynamics in terms of changes in the last 60 years at European level, treating themselves in distinct special issues of liberalization of abortion and marital status. A continuity and deepening of the theme is surprised by treating the subject in Part III of *Social Protection of Family*, made legitimately by bringing in the forefront of European debate to the family as a pillar of society regarding social protection in modern societies (Nicolaescu, 2010). In the last part of the paper, *Anti Poverty Measures analysis* is focused on the treatment of themes regarding Unemployment benefit and Minimum Income Guaranteed Schemes.

The volume is characterized by at least three important coordinates:

- a. first, the author brings to the forefront the debate on dynamic analysis of progress at the socio-economic level regarding the countries who accessing successively to the European Union; the line of comparisons in this paper provides a framework for fundamental reflection to reposition of supportive policies of the European Union to the Member suffering of specific gaps in social protection.
- b. a significant and distinctive dimension of the paper refers to the chronological approach to the themes of the presented sections, showing a historically knowledge transfer that recalls the vision of the reader to follow the route of social development of Member States, to integrate both innovation in information flows and necessary changes in social protection reform.
- c. a special distinction in terms of the work refers to the magnitude, complexity and accuracy of statistical data and documentary sources used by the author, the path innovative treatment and convergence parts of the work, as well as segmentation and detailing particular aspects of the system social protection implemented by European Union member states; synthesizer effort present in this work derives from extremely varied instrumentation information, and the ability to sort and present the findings of comparative, offering an example of capitalizing on existing data at European level in the social field.

The volume published at ProUniversitaria (Collection Psychosocial Sciences, coordinators Mihaela Tomita and Maria Simona Stanescu) is a reference work addressed both to researchers, to specialists in social sphere and decision makers in the sphere of administrative and political areas given the complexity and multitude of issues addressed. Also, by itself profile compared the book represents an excellent material for reflection at European level, an aspect mentioned in the end of the volume: 'The commitment of European Union member-states towards accomplishing the commonly agreed goals (1997 European Employment Strategy, 2000 Lisbon Strategy and Europa 2020) is supported by a continuous assessment of social policy tendencies' (p. 160).

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