

EDUCATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED THROUGH THE PROJECT “A NEW DAY FOR A JOB“

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Abstract. “A new day for a job” is a joint project of Microsoft Croatia associates and Croatian Society for Informatical Education Promotion, through which computer skills course for the unemployed was organized. The course was conducted from June to September 2007 in five Croatian districts: Bjelovarsko-bilogorska, Koprivničko-križevačka, Ličko-senjska, Vukovarsko-srijemska and Zadarska. The course included 425 attendants chosen by the Croatian Central Employment Office based on the length of registration with the employment board. The courses consisted of 40 lessons during which Windows XP, MS Word, MS Excel, MS Power Point and the Internet explorer programmes were taught. The lessons were held in specialised computer workrooms with groups of 12 to maximum 15 persons. The lecturers were certified ECDL trainers. At the end of the courses the attendants took a test similar to ECDL tests and were thus prepared for taking optional ECDL tests which would be registered in their labour booklets. The Project’s goal was to provide the unemployed people of poor financial state with an opportunity to obtain an ECDL certificate registered in their in their booklets without greater expenses. The need for a lifelong education is not a privilege anymore, but a modern labour market requirement. The test results were analysed based on professional preparation, the attendants’ age, and the duration of the period they were registered at the employment bureau .

Keywords. education, lessons, computer, unemployment

1. INTRODUCTION

Being employed is one of essential aspects of human life in the modern society. Fryer and Payne (1986)¹ define employment as a voluntary, institutionally regulated, contractual exchange between two parties, of which one sells and the other purchases work, mostly for money. Essential elements of employment emphasized by this definition are: work, compensation for that work, the voluntary exchange principle and institutional regulation. According to the Lexicon of Economy (Ekonomski leksikon)² employment is a work commitment for the purpose of making profit, i.e. being rewarded for one’s work, usually in money.

Since an average employee spends almost a third of his/her life working, it is not surprising that being employed is very significant and, in theory, attributed with various functions³. The economic function of work is certainly undisputable and most easily perceived. Money ensures everything, from

¹ Fryer, D.; Payne, R. (1986): *Being unemployed: A review of the literature on the psychological experience of unemployment*. In C. L. Cooper & I. Robertson (Eds.): *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (pp. 235-278); John Wiley & Sons, Chichester

² *Ekonomski leksikon* (1995), editor-in-chief: Zvonimir Baletić; Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, Zagreb

³ Šverko, B., (1991): *Znanje rada u životu pojedinca: radne vrijednosti, važnost rada i alijenacija*; Uvod u psihologiju (15-56); Prosvjeta, Zagreb

basic existential requirements such as housing, heating, food, to various luxuries like voyages, hobbies, courses, etc., and employment should facilitate earning it. Besides that, employment gives us an opportunity to develop friendships and social contacts, to associate, exchange and compare experiences. Work is also a source of social status and prestige. In addition, its psychological function is exceptionally interesting from an individual's perspective. A job can be a source of self-esteem and confidence in one's own value and potentials and, generally, psychological welfare. Furthermore, one's job is often the main element of one's identity.

Some authors rank losing one's job among 10 most stressful events (Spera, Buhrfeind & Pennebaker, 1994; Hanisch, 1999). According to the definition, losing one's job means staying without a paid workplace against one's own will (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg and Kinicki, 2005). This is, undoubtedly, an extremely stressful experience: one's source of income is lost and the person is unable to influence the outcome of such a situation. Numerous written references point to various consequences of unemployment and their negative effect on individual's welfare. Among possible unemployment effects on one's well-being, the most frequently cited are: depression (Hamilton, Hoffman, Broman & Rauma, 1993), threaten mental health (Wanberg, 1995), perception of enlarged financial efforts⁴, low self-esteem⁵, mental unrest, anxiety, dissatisfaction with life, pessimistic view of the future, and social isolation⁶. Unemployment directly enhances the risk of poverty⁷.

⁴ Kinicki, A., Prussia, G., & McKee-Ryan, F. (2000): *A panel study of coping with involuntary job loss*; Academy of Management Journal, 43, 90-100.

⁵ Rowley, K.M. & Feather, N. T.(1987): *The impact of unemployment in relation to age and length of unemployment*, Journal of Occupational Psychology, 60, 323-332.

⁶ Fryer, D. (1998): *Labour market disadvantage, deprivation and mental health*. *Health Psychol.*1997; 2: 373-397 taken from Zbornik radova XII. ljetne škole studenata i nastavnika Odsjeka za psihologiju Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu: *Psihološki aspekti nezaposlenosti*, edited by: Galešić, M., Maslić Seršić, D., Šverko, B.(2002.), Silba, Odsjek za psihologiju Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu (taken at <http://mjesecc.ffzg.hr/nezaposlenost/> on 10th April 2008)

⁷ Šverko, B., Galešić, M., Maslić-Seršić, D. (2004): *Aktivnosti i financijsko stanje nezaposlenih u Hrvatskoj. Ima li osnove za tezu o socijalnoj isključenosti dugotrajno nezaposlenih osoba?* Revija za socijalnu politiku, year 11, No. 3-4, 2004,

The unemployed not only lose positive social status achieved through a paid job, but also often become objects of different prejudice⁸. Certain researches show that the unemployed often feel stigmatised and the degree to which one feels stigmatised is in proportion with mental health deterioration.

One of the consequences of privatisation and restructuring process Croatia and all other transition countries have gone through is high unemployment rate, with both national and regional particularities. For some time now Croatia has had high rates of both registered and polling unemployment (over 15%). Long-term unemployment (lasting longer than a year), which adds up to more than half of the unemployed population, also represents a significant problem. As a rule, it leads to work and professional skills deterioration, more difficult employment, financial problems and withdrawal from the labour market⁹.

Drucker¹⁰ recognizes a new dominant group of "highly educated workers" in the modern society, which is ousting previously dominant "industrial workers" who cannot easily switch to new "educated jobs" and services and thus remain unemployed. Transition Croatia can also pinpoint a part of its relatively high unemployment rate to problems in switching workers from "industrial" workers to "highly educated workers" category. As Murnan and Krueger¹¹ studies indicate, the individuals who possess high-quality capabilities or computer skills have advantage on modern labour market. This is precisely why "A new day for a job" project offers greater possibilities in finding jobs in the future to the unemployed.

p. 283-298; Gallie, D., Paugam, S., S. Jacobs (2003): *Unemployment, Poverty, and Social Isolation. Is There a Vicious Circle of Social Exclusion?* European Societies, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2003, p. 1-31.

⁸ Ibidem ¹

⁹ *Siromaštvo, nezaposlenost i socijalna isključenost* (2006); Program Ujedinjenih naroda za razvoj (UNDP), editor-in-chief Nenad Starc, Zagreb

¹⁰ Drucker, P. (2005): *Najvažnije o menadžmentu*, M.E.P. Consult, Zagreb

¹¹ Samuelson, P. A.; Nordhaus, W. D. (2000): *Ekonomija*. Zagreb, Mate according to Card, D.; Krueger, A. (1996): *Labour Market Effects of School Quality: Theory and Evidence*, Working Papers 736; Princeton University, Department of Economics, Industrial Relations Section; and Levy, F., Murnane, R. J. (1992): *U.S. Earnings Levels and Earnings Inequality: A Review of Recent Trends and Proposed Explanations*, Journal of Economic Literature, American Economic Association, vol. 30(3)

Characteristics of Zadar district are a bigger share of women in the unemployed population (over 60 %) and a big share (over 50%) of long-term unemployed persons registered with the employment board for a period longer than 12 months. "A new day for a job" project was oriented precisely on these categories of the unemployed.

"A new day for a job" is a joint project of Microsoft Croatia associates and Croatian Society for Informatical Education Promotion within the global "UP" initiative promotion in the Republic of Croatia during 2007. Microsoft Unlimited Potential ("UP") is a global initiative by the Microsoft Corporation with a goal of providing information and communication technologies (ICT) education to young people and adults from special needs social groups.

Croatian Society for Informatical Education Promotion (HDPIO) is a non-profit nongovernmental professional association which promotes computer education and information and communication technologies education.

Goals of the Project implementation in Croatia are the following: preparation of teaching materials in Croatian language, publication of prepared materials that should be available to all the participants free of charge, teacher training in teaching material usage, and organization of a course for a total of 425 long-term unemployed persons in five Croatian districts (Bjelovarsko-bilogorska, Koprivničko-križevačka, Ličko-senjska, Vukovarsko-srijemska and Zadarska districts).

2. TESTING METHODS

The research was conducted on the sample of 28 subjects, examinees – scholars of the fourth class of the elementary school who learned one teaching unit of mathematics using online teaching materials and 67 students who mastered MS Producer using e-learner teaching materials. At the end of the teaching materials processing, scholars and students filled in the poll about their satisfaction with this kind of teaching. The poll results were examined with descriptive statistic methods. The empiric research was conducted at the elementary school Šime Budinić in Zadar with the scholars of the fourth class and at the University of Zadar. Previously, the e-learner teaching material for the chosen methodical unit of mathematics was chosen in cooperation with the primary-school teacher (for the scholars of the elementary school Šime Budinić). Students which studied MS Producer using e-learner contents received in due time the CD with the MS Producer installing programs, the complete documentation of the program and the e-learner content about MS Producer. After having independently studied the MS Producer, a test was

conducted about the acquisition of the teaching contents together with a poll about the satisfaction on this kind of teaching.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When the scholars, members of the experimental group, finished the testing of the acquired teaching material through e-learner tests, they were asked to fill in the poll about the effects of the e-learner classes. They had the questionnaire enclosed. The scholars answered 14 questions and those were defined with YES/NO answers, with a,b,c,d multiple choice answers, or by giving marks from 1 to 5. From the poll we wanted to know if the scholars had computers at home and how much do they use them in educational purposes. The scholars evaluated the interest and the efficiency of this kind of teaching with marks from 1 to 5.¹² We were interested if the scholars, members of the experimental group, were more interested in this kind of teaching and if they want other subjects to be learned in this manner and how often. The scholars were asked if they learned more quickly using e-learner, if they needed help more often, if this kind of maths classes is easier for them, if they acquire information more quickly and if this kind of computer technology stimulated them to a higher activity in repeating and defining the teaching materials. At the question how do they evaluate the interest of this kind of teaching mathematics (marks from 1 to 5), 26 of 27 examinees (96%) evaluated this experimental way of teaching with the mark 5. Only one scholar evaluated it with the mark 3. Having accessed the documentation, this scholar, at the final exam achieved a worse result and it is possible that the answer was a reaction to the bad exam result, for he is an excellent scholar. It's possible that this kind of teaching wasn't suitable to this scholar who obviously gives the preference to the traditional teaching. These answers showed the enthusiasm of the scholars with the maths classes which is otherwise the most difficult and the least popular school subject. The efficiency of the maths learning using e-learner (marks from 1 to 5 was evaluated by the scholars with the mark 4 (11%) and the mark 5 (89%). All the 27 examinees expressed the wish to repeat the learning of another subject using e-learner teaching materials. The seventh question in the poll was: „How often would you like to learn like this the school subjects?“, and the offered answers were: every lesson, one lesson a day, one lesson a week, a few days every month, once a year. Most of the answers were that they want to learn every lesson through e-learner teaching materials (92,6%), which showed that the traditional teaching is not interesting to them and

¹² Zekanović-Korona Lj.: Informacijski efekti udaljenog učenja, Sveučilište u Zadru, 2007.

that they want a teaching refreshing using new technologies.¹³

The questionnaire which was filled in by the students, after having studied the e-learner materials about MS Producer, consisted of 14 questions and the answers were in the scale from 1 to 5 (from the smaller to the bigger). From the answer analysis which follows, it's obvious that students find this kind of studying very interesting, but their aren't enough e-learner teaching materials recommended to them by the teachers. The middle mark of the answer to the question how much do students know about e-learner materials is 2,7. The use of e-learner teaching materials was evaluated by the students with the middle mark 2,39. The e-learner teaching materials are motivating for the students ($x=2,9$). The education with the help of new educational technologies makes the learning easier (the middle mark of the mark is 3,52). Before the announced test students didn't spend much time to study the offered materials (the middle mark of the time spent is 2,37). From the answer to this question we concluded that the control of the teacher is essential because the students don't have enough self control for this kind of learning. For online learning students must be well motivated and disciplined during the performing of the given tasks. The difficulty of the questions was evaluated by the students with the mark 3,28, and their well-definition with the mark 3,68. After the announced knowledge test, the students started to study the offered materials more intensively. The mark for the time spent now is 2,9 and the deviation is 0,17 in relation to the time spent before the test announcement. The teaching material for the MS Producer is not considered difficult as itself (middle mark 3,23). The e-learner materials are the future for the students and they expressed it with the mark 3,53. Students estimated that the specialized teachers don't use e-learner teaching materials (the average mark to the question is 2,9), and that's why they cannot suggest students to use online education (average 2,77). The personal satisfaction with the use of e-learner teaching materials was shown with the average mark of 3,6.

4. CONCLUSION

From the analysis of the questionnaires of scholars and students it is visible that both are satisfied with online teaching. E-learner teaching materials are the very refreshings in teaching, they are motivating to work both students and scholars. At the moment there aren't much e-learner contents adapted to scholars and students. Teachers themselves should use this kind of education for the self improving. When the teachers would be

additionally trained for this kind of education, then they will suggest scholars and students to this kind of education. The designers of e-learner teaching materials should create teaching contents to motivate constantly the users in their work, not to give up the online education. The knowledge tests should be applicated constantly because it is stimulating for the users in their work and in the greater commitment in the study of the teaching contents. The young generations like this kind of innovations in education and they want to use them to refresh the teaching process. In online education it's necessary to communicate more with the users and stimulate the mutual communication among them. Teachers should start to make e-learner teaching materials for each course and this would be an explanation for all the lacks of clarity in the materials processing, to scholars and students.

5. LITERATURE

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¹³ Zekanović-Korona Lj.: *Informacijski efekti udaljenog učenja*, Sveučilište u Zadru, 2007.