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Matching skills and jobs: Experience of employees in Romania

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Abstract

In the actual challenging environment, progress and growth are more than an economic issue involving human capital, i.e., development of resources with knowledge, skills and competences. The offer and demand of the workforce are not sufficient to make progress; hence a concept is needed to bring together skills, competencies, jobs and productivity that drive economic growth. In this article, job mismatch has been dealt as a qualitative imbalance that occurs when the characteristics of the workers do not directly correlate with the work requirements. The results of a survey among higher educated adult employees in Romania are presented. Considering the self-evaluation of having a job, it is found that 79.2% match well with educational qualification and 20.8% do not match. It is important to improve this mismatch and set a equilibrium between the education offered to develop the resources and occupational requirements, emerging with changing business needs.

Keywords: Job–education mismatch, higher education employees, work performance

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1. Introduction

In the actual competitive world, the nature of work is changing. The success is dynamic and it depends on the newest knowledge, higher technologies, better use of work resources, best practices of human capital development, time and team management, innovation, future vision, lifelong learning, etc. In this context, job matching is just an indirect tool leading to work performance because knowledge, work capabilities and people engagement come together to reach the higher levels of performance. Employees who are better connected to their work are best performers.

Finding the right people for the right job is the new labour paradox. For companies, it is becoming more difficult to find the best employees to perform in competitive market and for people, it is becoming more complicated to search for the right job and find the best workplace that meets all their needs like income, work-life balance, professional career, motivation, etc.

Job matching is an actual concept which designates a situation of work employment. It arises from the need to rise work performance by creating a better match between person, i.e., characteristics of the workers (knowledge, competences, abilities and attitudes), and job (work requirements, responsibilities, and performance criteria). The match is a function that depends on many factors including material and intangible determinates on company or individual level.

Cedefop's European skills and jobs (ESJ) survey (2014) has revealed that about 30% of European (EU) employees are not well-matched to their workplaces, while about 45% of EU adult workers believe that their skills can be better developed or utilised at work. Moreover, there is a link and need between growing jobs and skills for the next decade and the importance of advanced digital skills (Cedefop, 2016). In this context, around 7 out of 10 adult EU employees need at least some fundamental ICT level to be able to perform their jobs and about one in three of those employees are at a risk of digital skill gaps (Cedefop, 2017).

In general, there are many types of mismatch depending on the level of linkage. If we are focusing on the level of education, the mismatch situation appears when the workers' level of education is different from that of the educational level needed to fulfil the workplace tasks and responsibilities at a higher level of performance. From the qualification perspective, the mismatch situation is manifested when the level and type of qualification of the workers are different from the qualification required to perform the workplace tasks. Also, the skill or competences mismatch is an imbalance situation when the competences and/or skills of the employees are different from those necessary to carry out the work tasks. The concepts of education, qualification mismatch or skill mismatch are closely related but the deep analyses reveal some differences especially regarding assessment and availability of the statistical data.

Estimation of job mismatch and its effects on work productivity can be achieved through several methods, each with advantages and disadvantages. Analyzing skill mismatch using direct measures through direct method analyses, Desjardins and Rubenson K. (2011) emphasize that the influence of skills is a very important factor in studying the effects of mismatch (Desjardins & Rubenson, 2011).

The methods used to estimate the job mismatch have to bring to the light that an employee who has the education, qualification and skills necessary to carry out the tasks, responsibilities or work activities and, above all, has the ability to achieve the expected performance at workplace.

As a measurement, there are just a few approaches used namely: a normative measure based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations alongside a statistical measure, and a self-assessment that is easy to use and analyze the available data. The employees are asked about their personal perceptions about their education or skills used in their job related to work requirements in the individual company, i.e., perceived utilization, till date.

Educational mismatches affect wages, job satisfaction, work performance and other results. The in-depth analysis of Romanian labour market inequalities shows significant gaps in labour market

participation for specific groups but education remains one of the most important factors shaping the access of individuals to jobs and learning opportunities (Zamfir & Mocanu, 2016). A survey investigating the perception of Romanian workers on different aspects of the Romanian labour market revealed that both employees and employers struggle for finding a job and, on the other side of the barricade, finding employees with appropriate qualifications, respectively (Cojanu, 2011).

1.1. Estimating job mismatch: methodology

From the perspective of this article, we deal with job mismatch as a qualitative imbalance that occurs when the characteristics of the workers (level of education, qualification, and skills) are not in direct correlation with the work requirements, with emphasis on the education level. To investigate the job mismatch and effects on work performance, we have conducted a questionnaire based survey, among employed adults with higher education. Information on actual job, level of education, skills, workplace performance and vocational training has been gathered.

The purpose of the methodology is to estimate the situation of job mismatch from the point of view of education level, skills and competences and the influence on work performance defined as the expected level of achievement of tasks, responsibilities and work objectives. Higher education will equip persons with relevant skills to be active employees and fulfill job requirements in terms of productivity and competitiveness.

The research method is based on the self-evaluation method that ensures a high degree of confidence in data collecting and permits in-depth analysis of the individual aspects of work situation and understanding information gathered through application.

In other words, the estimating methods highlight the employee's self-assessment of having the appropriate education, competences and skills to achieve the expected results and performance at the workplace, i.e., the employee competence related to the one required to do the job (the right competence for the right job). The employees evaluate their own professional capacity in relation to the work responsibilities reflected by the performance standard.

1.2. Findings and results: educational mismatch

The sample consisted of 1202 Romanian employed adults with third level of education, from urban and rural including women and men. For the purpose of self-assessment of the educational mismatch, we analyze employees' perceptions about the appropriate level of education needed for workplace responsibilities. The persons who participated in this investigation were selected from those with higher education in the following order: graduate level (72.9%), master's degree (25.2%) and doctoral studies (with PhD diploma) (1.9%). However, the specific educational requirements (or level of training) for the actual job may vary, from higher education to secondary education.

Thus, 1.8% of employees declared that the required level of education for their job is doctoral studies, and 14.8% of the total said that master studies are suitable for the current occupation. Most of the participants, 62.6% affirm that the graduate level is required for the current occupation.

On the other hand, the educational level required for the current job is inferior for over 20% of the employees, of which 10.0% of total have occupations with a post-secondary or technical level of education required, and 10.1% of all people have occupations with a high-school level of education requirements. Around 0.5% has occupations with another level of training and 0.1% cannot appreciate exactly or don't answer (Figure 1).

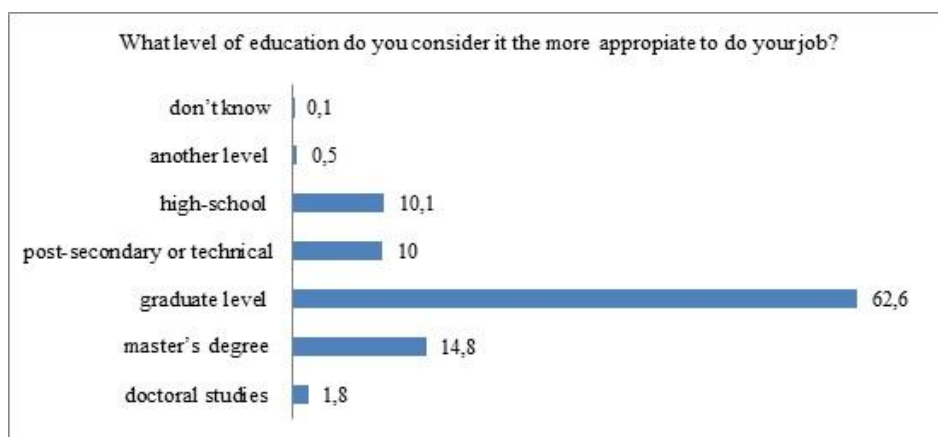


Figure 1. Level of education (self-assessment)

To estimate the educational mismatch through the self-assessment method, we conducted a cross tabulation analysis. We analyze the distribution of the employees in terms of the educational level, depending on their estimation of the appropriate level of education for the actual job (Table 1).

Table 1: Level of education to practice the actual job and employees by education (%) (cross tabulation)

	What do you think is the most appropriate level of education to practice the actual job?						
	Doctoral, PhD	Master	Graduate level	Post-secondary	High school	Others	Don't know
Graduate level	0.8	5.4	70.4	11.0	12.0	0.3	0.1
Education Master	2.6	41.6	41.9	7.6	5.3	1.0	0,0
Doctoral, PhD	30.4	21.7	39.1	4.3	4.3	0.0	0.0

As we see in Table 1, among the employees who graduated with a bachelor's degree, 70.4% consider that the level of education appropriate for the current occupation would be similar to their undergraduate studies; we can say that they are matched in terms of their education.

Among those graduating with a master's degree, 41.6% declare that the level of education appropriate for current job would be similar to their master's studies; we can say that they are adequately occupied from the point of view of the level of education. However, due to changes in national legislation and the typology of educational levels, there is no clear delimitation so we can consider that, totally, 83.5% of people with master studies are adequately occupied.

Among the employees who have a doctoral degree, 30.4% consider that the right level of education for actual job would be similar to their doctoral study level; we can say that they are matched from the point of view of the level of education.

Totally, considering that the investigation was made among the persons with higher education, we estimate that 79.2% of the total is matched in terms of education and 20.8% are mismatched, according to their assessments.

2. Conclusions

In order to identify the general framework of mismatched situations and to estimate the dimension of inadequacy, we conducted a questionnaire based survey, among the Romanian employees with

higher education. The methods highlight the employee's self-assessment on having the appropriate level of education, competences and skills to achieve the expected results and performance at the workplace. Considering that investigated persons are employees with higher education, we can admit that those who consider that the level of education suitable for the actual job would be higher education, respectively, doctorate, master, and license; respectively 79.2% of the total are well matched. On the other hand, we concluded that those employees who consider the right level of education would be different, i.e., post-secondary, high-school, or others, a percent of 20.8% respectively, are mismatched in terms of education.

The challenge of matching the right educated employees to the right job have great importance to improve the equilibrium between the educational offer for the newest skills, competences, knowledge and the occupational requirements coming from the changing business needs.

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