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# DRIVING FORCES FOR RETURNING BEHAVIOUR AFTER GRADUATION ABROAD

Case  
Study

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## Keywords

*Well-educated graduates,  
Returning behaviour,  
Professional development*

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## JEL Classification

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## Abstract

*Internationalization of higher education and workforce is an increasing phenomenon, due to global competitiveness and global competition for hiring of well-educated workers and talents, in order to generate benefits and progress. In these circumstances, the present article aims to evaluate the ability of young people to manage their learning and work experiences. So, we present the main results and conclusions of a questionnaire-based survey, asking young graduates about their educational and working experiences abroad and their motivations for returning home and decision for working in Romanian companies. The conclusions reveal that there are many forces that drive the returning behaviour of well-educated graduates that shows their ability to support change and transfer learning outcomes and competences from one job to another.*

## **INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGH- EDUCATED WORKFORCE**

Globalization has broken down borders and a flow of information, well-educated young persons and high qualified workforce can easily spread all over the world. Today's workforce can come from any part of the world wide labour market. Running by the forces of globalization, the process of internationalization developed many new opportunities to higher education institutions and labour markets. At the same time, wide professional ways are open for workforce especially young graduates in this fluid environment.

Internationalization can be perceived in the way that large numbers of universities have adopted expanded learning programs that extend beyond local and national boundaries and aiming to produce "global citizens" with "global competencies" (UNESCO, 2009).

The Bologna process and Lisbon strategy in Europe are the clearest examples of international education, with the Bologna process drawing more than 40 countries into a "European higher education area." It is hoped that the European higher education area (EHEA) will achieve a common, Europe-wide framework of understanding around tertiary education and lifelong learning, with significant cross border intelligibility of degrees and qualifications, and a high level of quality, attractiveness, and competitiveness on a global scale (European Commission, 1999).

## **...AND INFLUENCE ON INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE**

Also challenges and risks are inherent in this complex phenomenon. Moreover in the last decade, major shifts have occurred in the educational needs, career and expectations of the graduates across the world.

Labour reallocation as the sum of job creation and job destruction is an increasing phenomenon. As new jobs are created, others risk being destroyed. Cultures of sharing, negotiating with others and finding compromises seems to be what can 'save us' from the robots. Europe's advantage in the future highly-automated world of work lies in its creativity and highly-skilled workforce (Cedefop, 2012).

These trends put significant pressure on individual behavior requiring ways of strategic thinking and acting with regard to the international dimension of labour. Adaptation and **resilience** are main forces of a balanced individual behaviour on labour market.

At the same time, work-life balance preferences are changing. Millennials are intelligent and willing to have more diversity and also more flexibility in their work patterns and commitments. They are reinventing the essence of economic exchange, professional fulfilment, and even consumption itself through the collaborative economy and a growing army of 'prosumers', with products and services being delivered on-demand and just-in-time (European Commission, 2016). Work brings societies together. It translates talent into broader economic virtue and lends meaning as well as structure to most people's lives.

Studying the Pattern of Growth at county level in Romania, researchers (Lincaru C., Pirciog S., 2017) show that intra- and inter-sectoral labour force reallocation are part of labour market functioning but are tracking valuable inputs in education and skill formation. More, Popescu Andreica M. and Roman M. (2017) evaluated that the training investment has a positive modest impact upon employability in Romania for people living in urban areas. Measures for increasing the impacts of the vocational training programme in Romania are identified in terms of better targeting and profiling the trainees and closer adjustment of the programme to the specific needs of the labour market.

## **STUDYING ABROAD AND RETURNING BEHAVIOUR**

Young people studying abroad and well-educated workforce represent a huge work potential with many potential benefits for labour market development. Knowledge is continuously gained through both personal and environmental experiences (Kolb, 1984). Through studying and working abroad, young people can develop their competences, acquire new skills, and increase their experiences.

When people who graduated or worked abroad have returned home, they transfer human capital and skills. The efficiency of employment depends on quality of human capital only if skills, knowledge of return graduates are successful employed and if the home labour market has the right policies to encourage engagement of returnees and to use their skills. A better strategy includes providing information on employment possibilities, and establishing a favourable work environment for development and building a professional career.

## **REASONS FOR RETURNING AFTER GRADUATION**

Studying abroad is not one-way move, but dynamic.

What are the reasons why young graduates abroad choose to return to the Romanian labour market? There are many reasons other than lack of decision or difficulty in finding a job in foreign country.

The decision is part of a life strategy that involved study and temporary movement in order to gain experience and acquire knowledge and skills. More, there are personal determinants, in terms of youth perceptions, expectations and needs. Also, our previous investigation about Romanian youth intention for studying abroad and their returning dilemma (Velciu M., 2017) confirmed that the main reason for returning to the country would be the family, for the majority of respondents or young people who intend to study abroad. Between 70% and 80% of the young people said that to be with their family and friends they would decide to return to Romania after graduating or because they appreciate the Romanian values.

Only a small number of young people consider immigrant status or the livelihoods of daily living among strangers could cause them to return to the country. Some of the young people want to implement the lessons learned and the best practices, perhaps even the money savings, in order to start a business in Romania, due to the higher profitability rate of the entrepreneurial activities in the country of origin. Students can also choose to complete their studies abroad to acquire skills that are highly valued in the country. That reflect the intention of young who intend to study abroad.

### **INVESTIGATION REGARDING THE RETURNING BEHAVIOUR OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE STUDIED ABROAD**

For studying the characteristics of participation of Romanian young people who have studied abroad on national labour market (employment and professional career opportunities) and the employers' interest in engagement a graduate who has studied abroad also human resource policy practices in Romanian companies, we conducted an survey based on interview.

#### **Methodology**

We ask young graduates about their educational and working experiences abroad and their decision for working in Romanian companies. The information reflect the intrinsic motivation of returning behaviour and the personal lessons gained through experience in foreign environment. More we are interested in the ability to implement experiences in Romanian labour market.

#### **Results**

The result interpretation is based on the answers received from interviewing 20 graduates abroad who are currently working in Romania. The

majority 90% of respondents attended postgraduate studies like master or doctorate. They studied in the UK, the Netherlands, France, etc., spending one year abroad for master classes and 2-4 years for university courses. The interview consist in a number of qualitative questions starting from the decision to study abroad and returning home with graduation, continuing with appreciations regarding experiences abroad and Romanian market.

About the reasons why they went to study abroad, the majority express the desire to interact with the education system outside the country, looking for opportunities or at the impulse of the family. From the beginning, there is a belief that studying outside the country means more employment opportunities on Romanian labor market or outside the country. Being able to describe the study experience abroad, young people have a positive appreciation for the foreign education system. All respondents highlighted the communication and open relationship, the access to information, the way of organizing activities and mainly the emphasis that is put on practical learning and competences.

About the reasons for returning home, the respondents had quite different motivations, but the first reason is by far the lack of a certain employment opportunity and/or the possibility to continue education. Most of them returned because they believe that they would have more opportunities for professional development, clearly counting on the positive appreciation of their studies and abroad experiences by Romanian employers. The decision to return home is largely correlated with their labor market experience in the country where they studied.

All respondents admitted that, from the point of view of personal development and self-confidence, the time spent abroad was an exceptional experience despite all the difficulties. Now they can rely on their acquired competences and a great confidence in their own forces acquired during study abroad.

The decision for returning home and building a career in Romania was based precisely on the acquired competences, knowledge and know-how, also confidence balanced with the practical experience.

Most of them believe that the success is dependent on involvement and competences. An important lesson is how to integrate change, which is important not only in getting their first job but also throughout entire career.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Work is more dynamic. Learning through experience has significant advantages. We conclude that measures to encourage return to the country have to be considered, starting from

reasons for returning behaviour of respondents to the interview like: employment opportunities, possibility to build a professional career, put in practice competences and working experiences acquired abroad, without forgetting about cultural differences.

Economic and political stability and predictability sustain the decision of young people to return to the country. On the other hand, the freedom of movement within the European Union is another argument for the decision of the young graduates to return to the country, being very aware of the importance of the European citizen status.

Policy makers have to find more innovative ways to offer better work opportunities, life-long learning and personalised plans for employment, all adapted to the needs of individuals.

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