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Educational Concepts for Social Inclusion on the Labor Market of Young People at Risk

Petru Vasile Gafiuc^{a*}^a*Regional Association for Adult Education Suceava, 48 University Street, Suceava 720228, Romania*

Abstract

The European policies through its own funding programs underline the increase need for creating educational models for people at risk. Many official documents speak about vulnerable groups of the European society, constantly creating categorizations that are not always understandable and relevant for social workers with activities in social inclusion. Slightly less is discussed about the failure of some implemented programs to facilitate the social inclusion of vulnerable raised within the social assistance systems of the Member State. In Romania also, for some years now, a series of social integration models for youngsters which come from the child protection system was experimented, which unfortunately can't always be considered good practices. These young people abandoned by their families, are abandoned for the second time after graduation by the system in which they grew up and which offered them a range of services and protection measures, but without access to the labor market. Through the opportunities opened by the adult education system it is possible to develop some innovative training concepts for these young people which often do not require state protection by basic services, a house and food, but adequate employment opportunities. This article analyses the European and Romanian possibilities for the inclusion of youngsters at risk by proposing the implementation of a training and employment system through apprenticeship in local workshops or Small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This model offers youngsters a place of work where they can practice their competencies, a mentor from which they can learn, the experience of a job environment and of course a minimum income for their work. This training concept can be included and valorized by establishing a legal framework to facilitate the public-private partnership, the cooperation between adult education institutions, local businesses and child protection systems, for the benefit of this disadvantaged category.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +040-752 -323 881; fax: +040-0230 -524 128.

E-mail address: pvgafiuc@gmail.com

1. Introduction

In Romania, after the collapse of the communist regime, numerous dramatic situations of institutionalized children and young people were presented, and documentaries were shown worldwide that have thus brought pressure on the politicians of the time for reforming the child protection system. New protection organisms appeared, along with special schools, services and facilities for the beneficiaries of the child protection system. Compared with the previous Romanian legislation which contained only dispositions related to the children in need and which required protective measures, the current legislation expands its provisions on all children (such as the Law 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights), thus covering a larger contingent of situations.

The scientific problem that this paper addresses is the degree in which the existing public social services meet the educational needs of young people that are going to leave the welfare system and the extent to which these institutions support their integration on the labor market.

The aim of the study is analyzing the extent to which the services offered by the existing institutions ensure the social inclusion on the labor market of the young people leaving the child protection system, offering real qualification and job opportunities.

The motivation in choosing this theme is based on the fact that the author is working in a non-governmental organization, AREAS- The Regional Association for Adult Education Suceava and receives frequent requests from young people that have left the child protection system to offer the support in the search for a job.

2. Legislative notes on the needs and rights of young people from the protection system

The development of youngsters depends mostly on the influences of the environment. The assessment of his needs is made by measuring certain fundamental requirements regarding: health, supervision, security and promoting well-being, physical and emotional support, education, leisure, social interactions – belonging to a group, and ways of maintaining the ties with the extended family and with other persons towards which the young person developed ties of attachment, identity, developing independent living skills and family reintegration. All these are mentioned in the Order no 286/2006, for the approval of the Methodological Norms regarding the preparation of the Plan of Services and Methodological Norms on the Individualized Protection Plan.

From an emotional point of view, as the experts in the field specify, we can talk about four big categories of needs: for security and love, for new stimulating experiences, to be praised and recognized as capable, and the need for responsibilities (Borlea, 2008).

Depending on the previously mentioned needs of the young people, their rights were established. The Romanian legislators have enacted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by the Law 272/2004, on the protection and promotion of children's rights, according to which the children and youngsters have the following rights:

- to establish and preserve identity;
- to maintain personal relations with the family and other persons with whom the child has developed ties of attachment;
- to enjoy the highest attainable standards of health, medical services and recovery;
- to receive an education that will allow his skills and personality to develop in non-discriminatory conditions;
- the right of discernment, to freely express their opinion on any issue that concerns them;
- to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
- the right to information;
- to enjoy a standard of living that will allow their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development;
- the right to recognition and choice;
- to rest and leisure, to practice recreational activities, to freely participate in the cultural and artistic life and the right to be protected against economic, sexual and any other forms of exploitation.

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