

TYPES OF EDUCATION AND CAREER-RELATED ACTIVITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT ON THE INTERNET

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Abstract. The article is of theoretical and empirical character. Issues are raised in it pertaining to the education – and career-related activities of young people seeking employment on the Internet. On the basis of source literature, key concepts have been defined, and the situation in the labour market has been presented. The results of a survey conducted in the years 2018-2019 have been provided, which aimed to identify the types of education – and career-related activities of young people (up to 30 years of age), both unemployed and those not eligible for the status of an unemployed person (employed and unemployed) on the Internet. A number of forms of activities were analysed, starting with seeking information being essential from the point of view of the educational market and the labour market, through contacts with career counsellors, employment agents, employers and other persons, up to participation in discussions taking place on the Internet dealing with education – and career-related subjects. It follows from the analysis that the types of education – and career-related activities of young people seeking employment on the Internet focus mainly on the following: information on job and educational offers, situation in the labour market, contacts with employers, browsing educational and vocational websites. Unfortunately, young people very rarely visited the websites of institutions providing support with respect to educational and vocational issues and only occasionally contacted specialists in this field.

RODZAJE AKTYWNOŚCI EDUKACYJNO- -ZAWODOWEJ OSÓB MŁODYCH POSZUKUJĄCYCH ZATRUDNIENIA W SIECI INTERNETOWEJ

Słowa kluczowe: rynek pracy, osoby poszukujące zatrudnienia, młode osoby bezrobotne, aktywność edukacyjno-zawodowa, Internet

Streszczenie. Artykuł ma charakter teoretyczno-empiryczny. Poruszono w nim kwestie związane z aktywnością edukacyjno-zawodową osób młodych, poszukujących zatrudnienia w sieci internetowej. Na podstawie literatury przedmiotu zdefiniowano kluczowe pojęcia oraz przedstawiono sytuację na rynku pracy. Zaprezentowano wyniki badań sondażowych przeprowadzonych w latach 2018–2019, których celem było wskazanie rodzajów aktywności edukacyjno-zawodowej ludzi młodych (do 30. roku życia), zarówno bezrobotnych, jak i nieposiadających statusu osoby bezrobotnej (pracujących oraz niepracujących) w sieci. Analizie poddano wiele form aktywności, począwszy od poszukiwania informacji istotnych z punktu widzenia rynku edukacyjnego i rynku pracy, poprzez kontakty z doradcami zawodowymi, pośrednikami pracy, pracodawcami i innymi osobami, aż do uczestnictwa w dyskusjach odbywających się w sieci na tematy edukacyjno-zawodowe. Z przeprowadzonej analizy wynika, że rodzaje aktywności edukacyjno-zawodowej osób młodych, poszukujących zatrudnienia w sieci koncentrują się w głównej mierze na: informacjach o ofertach pracy i ofertach edukacyjnych, sytuacji na rynku pracy, kontaktach z pracodawcami, przeglądaniu stron o tematyce edukacyjnej i zawodowej. Niestety bardzo rzadko młodzi ludzie odwiedzali strony internetowe instytucji zajmujących się wsparciem z zakresu spraw edukacyjno-zawodowych i sporadycznie kontaktowali się ze specjalistami z tego zakresu.

Introduction

The labour market is defined in many ways. Economics provides the business rationale for market development, whereas social sciences (mostly sociology) describe the social structure and its dynamics, such as groups and organisations operating in the labour market, social categories, etc., including social transformations resulting from changes that occur in the labour market. The simplest definition says that the labour market comprises the employees who are able to work and employers who are willing to recruit employees (Szaban, 2016, p. 15).

The contemporary labour market is characterised by much variability and, consequently, unpredictability as well. Many dynamic changes are taking place, and employers' needs and expectations towards aspiring employees are also

evolving: these concern not only the demand for a specified number of required staff, but also their qualifications and competencies (Plewka, 2017a, p. 35). Therefore, without doubt, it may be considered that the labour market is presently undergoing a significant transformation. This situation is affected both by globalisation processes and technological progress, including the growth of modern information and communication technologies. The development of new digital engineering solutions has a clear impact on the situation in the labour market: high-class specialists are in demand, especially computer programmers, who are more and more difficult to find. Due to the fact that workers are being replaced by machines, the demand for some jobs is decreasing, with others appearing simultaneously. This leads to the phenomenon of technological unemployment, originating in the mismatch between the competencies of people in the labour market and the more and more changing demand for the same (Kruczkowska, 2016, p. 119). The phenomena that shape the present labour market are also related to the multigenerationality, the aging society or an inconsistency between educational directions and market needs. The market in question presents a great number of challenges to employees (including jobseekers), as well as to employers. Those who are looking for a job at present must not only have the relevant education (in terms of knowledge, education and competencies), but they must also rely on self-initiative (Plewka, 2017b, p. 107). Employers, on the other hand, encounter difficulties in winning specialist (which results in the so-called “employee’s market” regarding some professions).

Pursuant to the Act of 20 April 2004 on employment promotion and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws of 2004, No 99, Item 1001, Article 49), persons up to 25 years of age were considered the young unemployed. However, as a result of an amendment by means of the Act of 14 March 2014 amending the act on employment promotion and labour market institutions and certain other acts (Journal of Laws of 2014, Item 598), this concept was extended to include the young unemployed until the age of 30; therefore, Polish statistics distinguish persons up to 25 and 30 years of age. In turn, jobseekers include both unemployed people and those who look for a job but are eligible for the status of an unemployed person, because they do not meet the criteria as specified in the abovementioned Act on employment promotion and labour market institutions. A person seeking employment is therefore not entitled to receive unemployment benefits, is not registered for health insurance, and health insurance premiums are not paid for him/her (*Wortal PSZ*, 2020). At present, there are representatives of four generations who are different from one another: Baby

Boomers, X, Y, Z (cf. Klementowska, Flaszynska, 2018); in addition, reference is also made to the NEET Generation¹. Representatives of the youngest generation in the labour market (since this article is about them) differ significantly from their predecessors: they usually have high formal qualifications (unfortunately, often inconsistent with market requirements), know foreign languages and new technologies, and the Internet is their primary (oftentimes only) source of information (which is particularly important from the point of view of this paper). For the purposes of the article, young jobseekers have been considered to include representatives of Generations Y and Z, i.e. persons under the age of 30 years, both unemployed and not eligible for the status of an unemployed person (employed as well as unemployed).

Currently, there is a vast amount of educational – and career-related information on the Internet: for certain, everyone can find something for themselves. Employers, educational institutions, as well as supporting agencies, try to outdo one another as regards offers. The amount of data is so large that it is sometimes difficult to make a specific choice. Additionally, jobseekers may follow the situation in the labour market, enrich their knowledge (e.g. by means of self-education), advertise themselves for jobs or participate in education and career forums, etc. The Internet is therefore a rich source of information and provides great opportunities, especially for young people who have adequate skills as far as taking advantage of this potential. Taking the above issues into account, it has been adopted that the aim of this paper is to present the types of education – and career-related activities of young people seeking employment on the Internet.

The situation in the Polish labour market

The Polish labour market, since the time of the introduction of the principles of the market economy, has been very unstable. In December 1990, the registered unemployment rate was 6.5%. Until the end of the year 1993 (16.4%), it was on a constant rise. A slow decrease took place until 1997 (10.3%). The following years were relatively difficult for Poles, as the ever-growing unemployment rate reached as much as 20% in 2003. From 2004 (19%) to 2008 (9.5%), the situation improved. On the other hand, the years from 2009 (12.1%) until 2013 (13.4%) showed a next wave of increasing unemployment. Since 2014 (11.4%), a steady

¹ The acronym NEET refers to young people 18-24 years of age (in some countries, the limits differ), remaining outside the labour market and education system (cf. Skórska, pp. 44-45).

drop has been observed in the registered unemployment figures, which came to a level of 5.2% in December 2019 (*Stopa rejestrowanego bezrobocia*, 2020).

The situation of young people (to whom this article is devoted) has also raised concerns. Initially, these resulted mainly from young people's difficult situation in the labour market as compared to older persons: high unemployment rate, low professional activity and lower employment-to-population ratio. At present, this also pertains to lack of job security, low wages and high numbers of educationally and vocationally inactive persons in this age group (Klementowska, Flaszynska, 2018, pp. 83-84). The unemployment rate among young people is changing, similarly as in the case of the unemployment rates within the entire population. Almost until the end of 1994, an increase had been observed of the indicator, wherein its peak value was reported in the period from December 1993-February 1994 (36.0%). Afterwards, the rate fell until mid-1998 to reach the minimum value in March-May (21.8%). A further pre-accession period of growth lasted from Quarter One 2003, when a historically high level was reported of 46.5%. Following the accession of Poland to the European Union, there was a fall in unemployment, even among young people. The rate fell until the end of 2008, when a periodic minimum of 16.1% was registered in the third quarter of that year. The last period of growth took until Quarter One 2013 (28.2%). Since then, the unemployment rate among Poles aged 15-24 has been falling: in the third quarter of 2019, it was 10.8% (*Stopa bezrobocia młodych*, 2020).

Education – and career-related activities of young people seeking employment on the Internet: the methodological assumptions and presentation of the results of the survey

In order to become familiarised with the types of education – and career-related activities on the Internet, as preferred by representatives of the young generation seeking employment, a survey was conducted in the years 2018-2019² using a survey questionnaire (cf. Pilch, Bauman, 2010, pp. 79-82, 96-98, 160-161). The subject matter of the research was determined by the following problem: what are the types of education – and career-related activities of young people seeking employment on the Internet? The research sample comprised persons up to 30 years of age who were seeking employment. In total, 526 persons par-

² In 2017, a pilot survey was conducted among e-generation representatives (cf. Klementowska, 2017, pp. 46-48).

ticipated in the research, both registered as unemployed people and those not having the status of an unemployed person (including employed and unemployed persons).

Table 1. Average daily Internet usage (in hours)

Specification	N	%
Less than 1 hour	0	0.0
1 – 2	76	14.5
3 – 4	244	46.4
5 – 6	120	22.8
7 – 8	86	16.3
9 – 10	0	0.0
Over 10 hours	0	0.0
Total	526	100.0

Source: Own elaboration.

To begin with, young jobseekers were asked to provide their average daily Internet usage. In accordance with the information presented in Table 1, the representatives of the young generation participating in the survey most frequently spend from 3 to 4 hours a day online (46.4%). About 1/4 of the respondents use the Internet from 5 to 6 hours, and over 16% are online as long as 7-8 hours. Only 14.5% do this activity for 1 to 2 hours daily. None of the interviewees indicated a limit time below one hour or from 9 to over 10 hours a day.

Table 2. Frequency of using the Internet to obtain information of an educational and vocational nature as being useful for seeking employment

Specification	N	%
Every day	217	41.3
Several times a week	137	26.0
Once a week	93	17.7
Several times a month	63	12.0
Once a month	16	3.0
Several times a year	0	0.0
Once every half year	0	0.0
Once a year	0	0.0
Total	526	100.0

Source: Own elaboration.

In order to obtain information of an educational and vocational nature that can be useful for seeking employment, young people go online: Every day (41.3%), Several times a week (26%), Once a week (17.7%), Several times a month (12%) and Once a month (3%). The response suggestions “Several times a year” to “Once a year” were not indicated (Table 2).

Table 3. Types of education – and career-related activities of young people seeking employment on the Internet

Specification	N	%
Seeking information on directions of education, additional training and further vocational training	317	60.3
Seeking information on jobs	101	19.2
Seeking information on the situation in the labour market	490	93.2
Seeking job postings	526	100.0
Becoming familiar with legal documents	98	18.6
Seeking information on institutions providing career counselling services	87	16.5
Seeking information on institutions providing employment agency services	120	22.8
Contact with career counsellors	17	3.2
Contact with employment agents	42	8.0
Contact with employers	376	71.5
Contact with other persons	232	44.1
Using application document templates (CVs, motivation letters, etc)	261	49.6
Browsing websites devoted to vocational education, labour market, etc.	279	53.0
Participation in discussions on educational and vocational subjects	12	2.3
Other	0	0.0

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 3 presents the types of activities on the Internet of representatives of Generation Y and Z (i.e. young people up to 30 years of age) seeking employment which are related to the question of education and career and, to be more specific, to the issues that are useful for making decisions when selecting forms of education, additional training, further vocational training or looking for paid employment. The respondents had the possibility to make multiple choices from among 14 suggested answers, and an additional category of “Other” was

provided as well, where they could enter a form of activity specific for them that was missing in the suggestions provided (however, none of the examinees used this opportunity). As arises from the research material obtained, the key activity on the Internet was Seeking job postings (100%), as well as Seeking information on the situation in the labour market (93.2%). Establishing contact with employers (71.5%) was also important, as well as obtaining information on directions of education, additional training and further vocational training (60.3%). Over a half of the respondents (53%) browsed various educational and vocational websites, whereas 49.6% of the examinees used application document templates posted on the Internet. The interviewees also maintained online contact with other persons (they noted acquaintances, friends and family members), from whom they obtained information considered useful when seeking employment. An alarming fact was found that young people only occasionally sought information on supporting institutions in the field of career counselling (16.5%) and employment agencies (22.8%). Contacts with specialists were rare as well (career counsellors – 3.2%, employment agents – 8%). Those taking part in the survey were only marginally interested in information on jobs (19.2%) and legal regulations (18.6%), whereas participation in discussions on educational and vocational subjects was scarce (2.3%).

Table 4. Websites most frequently visited by young people seeking employment

Specification	N	%
Job search websites	526	100.0
Education resource websites, e.g. postgraduate studies, courses, training, etc.	277	52.7
Websites of institutions providing support with respect to educational and vocational issues	23	4.4
Other	0	0.0

Source: Own elaboration.

As can be seen from the data presented in Table 4, the websites that were most frequently visited by the participants in the research included those which provided job offers (100%), and slightly over half of the young people (52.7%) also followed education resource websites. Alas, websites of institutions providing support with respect to educational and vocational issues did not enjoy

much popularity (4.4%), which, undoubtedly, should be subjected to further discussion (obviously within another work). The respondents had an opportunity to provide their own suggestions of websites that they use in order to obtain information considered helpful in seeking employment, although no one used this opportunity.

Conclusions

On the basis of the research material collected, it may be ascertained that the types of education – and career-related activities of young people seeking employment on the Internet focus mainly on the following: information on job offers, situation in the labour market, contacts with employers, educational information (forms of education, additional training, further vocational training), browsing educational and vocational websites. Fewer than half of the examinees used application document templates and contacts with acquaintances, friends and family members regarding career matters. Approximately 1/4 of the interviewees sought information on jobs and familiarised themselves with legal documents. Unfortunately, when analysing the data obtained from the point of view of institutions providing career counselling and employment agency services, the situation does not instil optimism. As it turns out, the respondents very rarely looked for information about these sorts of institutions and almost never contacted specialists dealing with career or educational support (e.g. career counsellors, employment agents). This is a valuable piece of information, as such institutions provide, frequently on an additional basis, educational and vocational services over a distance by means of the Internet.

The results of the survey presented do not allow for a generalisation of the wider population. However, they may make a valuable contribution to a further diagnosis in regard to the matter in question. Resulting from the information obtained, it therefore seems reasonable to draw particular attention to young jobseekers' disinterest in: 1) information presented on the websites of institutions whose main goal is to provide support with respect to career counselling and employment agencies; 2) contacts with specialists in educational and vocational fields. Thus, the question arises about the quality of the jobseekers representing Generations Y and Z, who are so different from their forerunners.

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