Practices for collaboration between Universities, Businesses and the Third Sector: ICT formative project for the insertion of youths at risk of social exclusion

Üniversiteler, İşletmeler ve Üçüncü Sektör İşbirliği için Uygulamalar: Sosyal dışlanma riski olan gençlerin dahil edilmesi için biçimlendirici BİT projesi

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Abstract: "Even before the crisis, the employment situation of young people in Spain was more than three points below the European average (Navarrete, L. 2007). The economic downturn – and its specific characteristics in Spain – have worsened the situation and increased the vulnerability of young people, especially those with a lower level of education. The combination of age and lack of education puts this group at risk of social exclusion. This has significantly increased the demand and pressure on Third Sector organisations dedicated to this collective. While in Spain the Third Sector, including Ngo, held up well in the early years of the crisis, it should be noted that 70% of their income comes from public funds. This makes it imperative to seek financing alternatives to continue to meet social demands. To overcome the situation of social exclusion among young people, the key element is training. But it should be stressed that this training must be appropriate to the needs of companies. As a result of the globalization and the technological advances, companies need candidates with specific skills. It's essential to include, in the curricula for young people, technological skills useful for companies. The Plan of Digital Inclusion and Employability (Ministerio de Industria, Energía y Turismo de España (2013)), approved in June 2013, states that, from the point of view of economic growth and employment, the digital economy brings with it an increased demand for qualified professionals, making the ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) sector a priority area in generating opportunities for social inclusion. The main objective of the project is to design a training in ICT appropriate to young people in a situation of social exclusion without knowledge or experience in the sector, and ensure their insertion into the labour market in social enterprises and normal companies. To ensure the success of both the training and the insertion, these will involve tutoring sessions with individual coaching and implosive group coaching in order to accompany the young person throughout the whole process and exponentially improve the chances of success. Tutoring and coaching will be conducted for six months."

Keywords: Employability, ICT, Social Exclusion, Youth.

Öz: Krizden önce bile, İspanya'daki genç işsizliği Avrupa ortalamasının 3 puan altındaydı (Navarrete, L. 2007). Ekonomik durgunluk ve İspanya'daki temel özellikleri, genç insanların, özellikle de düşük eğitim seviyesine sahip olanların savunmasızlığını artırmıştır. Yaş seviyesi ve eğitim yokluğu bu grubu sosyal dışlanmışlık riski ile karşı karşıya getirmektedir. Bu durum, ilgili alanlarda faaliyet gösteren Üçüncü Sektör işletmelerine olan talebi ve üzerindeki baskıyı artırmıştır. İspanya'da sivil toplum kuruluşlarını da içeren Üçüncü Sektör krizin ilk yıllarında baskılara dayansa da, bu kurumların gelirlerinin %70'ini kamu fonlarından sağladığı göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır. Bu da sosyal talepleri karşılayabilmek için çeşitli finansman alternatiflerinin aranması gerekliliğini doğurmaktadır. Genç insanların sosyal dışlanmışlığı ile baş edebilmek için ana faktör eğitimdir. Ancak bu eğitimin işletmelerin gereksinimlerine uygun olması gerektiği de vurgulanmalıdır. Küreselleşme ve teknolojik gelişmeler sonucu işletmeler özel yetkinliklere sahip adaylara ihtiyaç duymaktadır. Gençler için geliştirilen eğitim müfredatlarına işletmeler için yararlı görülen teknolojik yetkinliklerin dahil edilmesi gerekmektedir. 2013 yılında onaylanan Dijital Kapsam ve İstihdam Planı (Ministerio de Industria, Energía y Turismo de España (2013)) ekonomik gelişme ve istihdam açısından dijital ekonominin nitelikli profesyonellere yönelik talebi artırdığını ve sosyal kapsamı artırabilmek için bilgi ve iletişim teknolojisi sektörünün öncelikle bir alan olduğunu belirtmektedir. Bu projenin temel amacı sosyal dışlanmışlık yaşayan ve sektör hakkında bilgisi ya da deneyimi olmayan genç insanlara uygun bilgi ve iletişim teknolojisi eğitimi tasarlamak ve böylece bu kişilerin sosyal girişimler veya diğer işletmelerde istihdam edilecek işgücü pazarına dahil edilmesini sağlamaktır. Hem eğitim hem de dahil edilme süreçlerinin başarılı olabilmesini sağlamak için bu programlar, gençlere süreç boyunca eşlik edecek kişisel koçluk ve takım koçluğu barındıran özel öğretim oturumları da içerecektir. Özel öğretim ve koçluk 6 ay boyunca sürecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İstihdam Edilebilirlik, Bilgi ve İletişim Teknolojileri, Sosyal Dışlanmışlık, Gençlik

1. Introduction

The economic downturn – and its specific characteristics in Spain –have worsened the situation and increased the vulnerability of young people, especially those with a lower level of education. As you can see in the fig. 1, in April 2014, according to data from the Labour Force Survey of the National Institute of Statistics, unemployment peaked at 53.5% for those under 25 years (53.2% men and 54% women). The combination of age and lack of education puts this group at risk of social exclusion. This fact has led to an increase in the demand of social aid by this group.
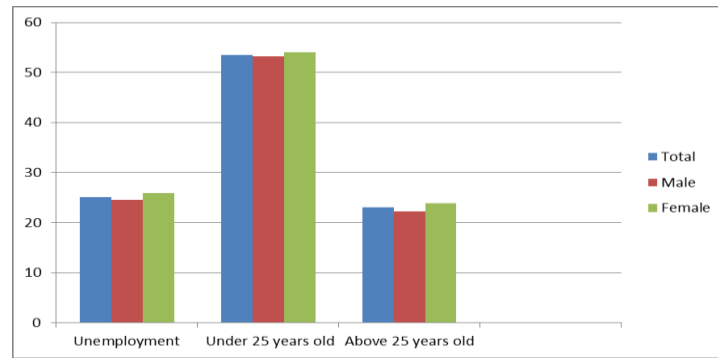
Fig. 1 Unemployment in Spain as for April 2014. Source EPA

Moreover, the economic crisis has financially affected the Third Sector. This impact has been especially evident since 2012 and it is due to the following factors, which were mentioned in the Study on Present and Future of the Third Sector (2013):
- Budgetary cuts, subventions cancelled and reduction in the amounts of the still existing ones.
- Difficulties to cash the amounts allotted due to delays because of areas by the Public Administration.
- Difficulties to have access to credits and increase in their rates.
It is noteworthy to mention that Spanish Third Sector organizations depend on public funding at 70%, so their future is dramatically engaged if no alternative solutions are found.
As it can be observed in Fig. 2, during the first years of the crisis, which in Spain started in 2007-2008, the Third Sector organizations kept the same funding levels. However, as shown in Fig. 3, their partners' contributions decreased as well as those from social action programmes of savings banks. In 2012, when budget cuttings add up to this situation of higher funding scarcity, the Third Sector starts facing a compromising economic situation where employment reduction plans appear, some entities merge and others disappear.
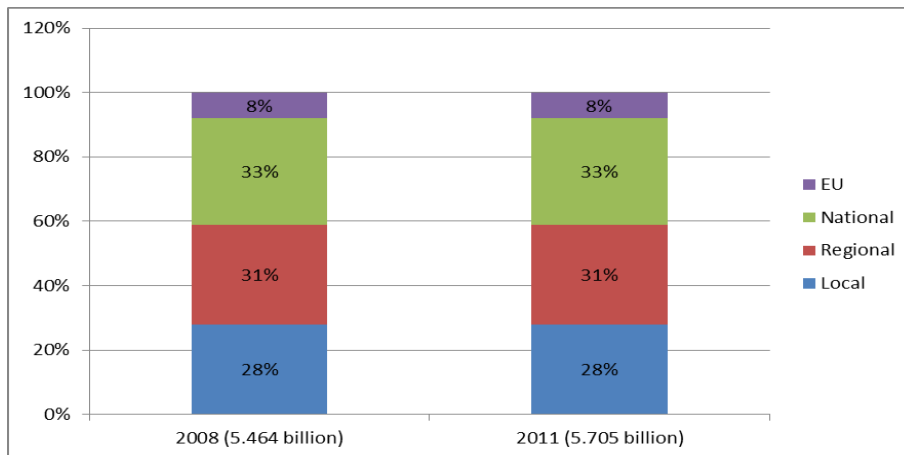

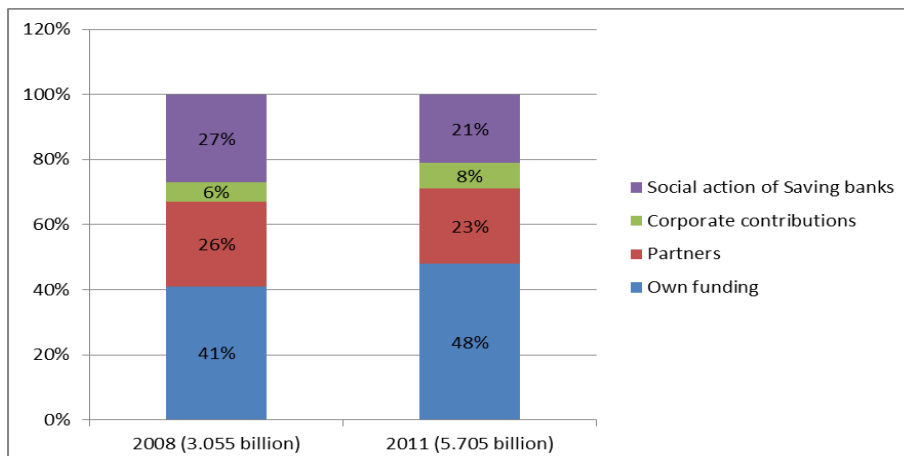Fig. 2 Evolution of public funding of Third Sector between 2008 and 2011

Fig. 3 Evolution of private funding of Third Sector between 2008 and 2011

Social organizations must face two main challenges in front of this situation of higher aid demand by young people:
- Giving an answer to young people at risk of social exclusion by designing programmes to ensure their professional future and to facilitate a stable social inclusion.
- Looking for financial alternatives to public granting which will have to focus, essentially, on private funding.

In order to face the first challenge, training is a key element. But it is important to highlight that such training has to be appropriate for the needs of businesses, so that the transition from the training period to the labor market is as efficient as possible.

The Program for Digital Inclusion and Employability, approved in June, focuses on the increasing importance of the fact that, from the point of view of economic and employment growth, digital economy implies higher demand of qualified professionals. The work done by the Observatorio Nacional de las Telecomunicaciones y de la Sociedad de la Información (ONTSI), Offer and Demand of Professionals in Digital Content, published in February 2013, clearly comes to the conclusion that the answer that is being given does not fit the requirements of companies in this sector. This makes it necessary to develop measures in order to adapt the offer in training, internships, and qualification to the reality of companies. Since the technological sector generates a wide range of demands with different levels of qualification, it is important to elaborate CIT training curricula for unqualified profiles to facilitate them access to the labor market.

Facing the second challenge means to get the commitment of companies of the technological field to elaborate the curriculum, the professionalization of students through internships, and course funding. In order to achieve this, it is important to obtain the companies' engagement via their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. Actually, in Fig. 3 it can be observed that between 2008 and 2011 there was a slight increase of 2%, which is a good indicator that this is the way to follow to solve the financial difficulty and dependence situation of the Third Sector.

With these two challenges in mind, our research group EJES (Spanish acronym for employment, young people and social exclusion, which also means 'axes') of the UAO designed a project aimed at granting quality CIT training, appropriate for the requirements of the labor market and facilitating both social insertion of young people at risk of exclusion and the onset of a professional career with a future. Since its establishment, the research group has counted on the collaboration of Fundació Privada Trinijove, Proyecto Universidad Empresa (PUE), and Cisco Systems.

Fundació Privada Trinijove began its activity in training and socio-labour areas, with people in social risk, in the year 1985. During this time they have been working in an active way to improve new measures and projects, with the purpose of overcoming the situations of social exclusion.

Proyecto Universidad Empresa (PUE) has focused its vision of business on innovation, validity and usability of the training offer and on certified knowledge of quality, with the aim of spreading new technologies in standard education and alleviating the lack of qualified technicians that, according to the most important consultancies of this sector, Spanish companies have.

Cisco Systems is the worldwide leader in networking that transforms how people connect, communicate and collaborate.

2. Description and justification of the project

This project intends to seek an innovative solution to answer the needs of training and employment of a particularly vulnerable social group, the youths in a situation of social exclusion. The innovation of the project consists of:

- Election of the technology sector as base of the project. Traditionally the trainings for youths with low qualification have been framed in areas of scarce added value (gardening, recycling, construction…) and vulnerable to the changes of the labor market. The Plan of Digital Inclusion and Employability approved last June as well as the study carried out by the ONTSI on the "offer and demand of professionals in digital contents", published in February 2013, emphasized that, from the point of view of economic growth and employment, the increasing importance of digital economy results in a bigger demand of professionals with technological know-how. Creating a technology training plan appropriate for the profiles of youths with low qualification not only will facilitate their insertion in a sector with a future, but will allow them to continue progressing.

- Linking between training and employment. Since its conception, the project has kept in mind the needs of companies. The training curriculum is designed ad hoc in order to answer the needs of companies that are not being covered. The companies that participate in the project commit themselves to incorporate to their staff those youths having carried out the training successfully.

- Individualized tutorial and coaching. A key item so that the project impact in the labor insertion is to know in depth the needs, abilities and weak points of each one of the participants in order to guide them and to accompany them throughout the process, from the training to the labor insertion. The tutorial is carried out

individually and in groups all along program. The aim of the individualized tutorial is to monitor the training process of each youth, the academic, personal, and professional orientation necessary to define his/her project in the future and the accompaniment in his/her educational and labor insertion upon finalizing the program.

- Private funding. This project is financed based on the contributions of companies through their programs of CSR and possible donations. This financing will allow us to focus on the results of employability with a greater flexibility than if we counted on public aids.

We stem from the development of a training curriculum for Smart Cities that includes global solutions of several technology manufacturers, and which is adequate to youths with low educational profile and in a situation of social exclusion.

A pilot course will be given to 20 youths selected by PUE and Fundació Trinijove through the INCORPORA program of La Caixa, financed with contributions of companies and donations.

All the youths finishing their training have their employability guaranteed. It is foreseen that 50% of them will be inserted in normal companies and the rest in Fundació Trinijove.

Technology training was chosen not only because it is one of the sectors with greater demand of professionals but also because it gives an answer to the anxieties and motivations of the youths, which encourages their return to the standard educational system.

3. Objectives of the project

Linking the training in CIT of 20 youths in a situation of social exclusion with the labor insertion in social insertion and standard companies.

Moreover, the project intends to link the training to a certificate of professionalism with official validity on the part of the regional governments and of the Ministry for Employment, and to relate it to the official certificates issued by the main manufacturers and multinationals of the technology sector. In this case, we would relate it to the certificates **by** CISCO SYSTEMS, world leader in Internet and network technologies, and MICROSOFT, world leader in software, which are the most demanded certificates by all industrial sectors.

The tutorial will consist of individual coaching sessions and group implosive sessions with the aim of accompanying the youth during the whole process and to exponentially improve his/her probabilities of success. The accompaniment and the tutorial action will be known and shared by all the members of the educational team of the program, which will allow us to make the necessary adjustments to guarantee the effectiveness of the training action. Additionally, this accompaniment centered on the incorporation in the company's staff, once the training action will be finished, will facilitate the passage toward the labor dynamics. The tutorial and coaching will be carried out for 6 months, that is to say, during the training and the following three months to accompany the process of labor insertion.

Likewise, our intention is to create, with private funding, a procedure of good practices to guarantee a technological training of quality and adequate to the needs of the market for youths in situations of exclusion. Besides, this project is not limited to the training. Its objective is the labor insertion.

4. Training curriculum

Course: TI Essentials 5.0 Scope and Sequence

This official course covers the basic principles of hardware and software, as well as advanced concepts such as security, networking and the responsibilities of an IT professional. The students that complete this course will be able to describe the internal components of a PC, to assemble a computer system, to install an operating system and to solve problems by means of the use of system tools and software of diagnosis, including mobile devices, such as tablets PC and smart phones. They will also acquire knowledge about the virtualization of client space, the operating system Microsoft Windows 7 and issues related to security, networking and troubleshooting.

The curriculum of IT Essentials (ITE) 5.0 prepares the candidate for:
- Diagnosing and repairing efficiently hardware problems.
- Perfect assembling of a computer.
- Installing Windows (OS), all the versions.
- Installation and configuration of security software such as anti-virus, firewall, Internet security and the like to assure the good operation of the machine.
- Adding peripherals and multimedia resources.
- Connection of a PC and a LAN (Network of Local Area) or to the Internet.

The main advantages of this certification program are:

- It is addressed to students without work experience in the CIT sector.
- It validates basic and fundamental know-how.
- It prepares students for the labor world and the professional certifications.
- It does not require prior neither labor experience on any technology or product.
- The exams can be carried out at the facilities of the training center.

PUE is commercial and academic distributor of the certifications in Spain for all those centers interested in offering the MTA certification (Microsoft Technology Associate). Likewise, it is an authorized certifying center (Authorized Testing Center) for people interested in obtaining the official certification.

5. Schedule

The proposal of training for profiles without prior knowledge is estimated at 150 contact hours and 150 self-training on-line hours via the training platform of the Cisco Networking Academy.

Since this is a vulnerable group lacking computers at home, they will be allowed to use those of the classroom in order to do the online part of their training. Additionally, in order to give students support on this online part, Cisco Systems volunteers will help them solve the doubts they may have. Moreover, once a month they will attend an English class by a volunteer engineer of Cisco Systems so that they will be introduced to the English technological terminology.

The course starts on June 25th, from 9 a.m. to 3 a.m. The sessions on Mondays and Fridays will be online and monitored, and from Tuesdays to Thursdays they will be held at the classroom. The last five sessions of the course will be devoted to labor issues such as preparing CVs and job interviews and each student will be individually oriented so as to facilitate their process of insertion in the labor market. The course ends on October 15th.

As from October 20, students will be able to start internships ranging between 3 to 6 months. Working for 5 hours a day in the morning, they will earn a remuneration of €400 per month.

6. Project evaluation

Up to this moment, the main difficulties delaying the kickoff of the project have been the following:

1.- Financial: the initial aim was to fund hundred per cent of this project with resources from CSR of one or several private companies. This objective has been partially attained. Eventually, the professional fee of the teacher giving classroom training is paid via a public grant, and the online training and the coaching sessions are covered with Cisco Systems volunteers and funds from the social organization.

2.- Teaching staff: because of the requirements of the grant that partially finances the project and of those required by the certifying organization, the teacher has to be an independent professional with Cisco System qualification as a trainer. Moreover, this professional had to prove having experience working with groups of young people at risk of exclusion in order to understand the difficulties of this group and to carry out follow-up and motivation actions leading to success. Finding the appropriate person took two months, which resulted in the corresponding delay in the beginning of the course.

3.- Students' gender parity: in the initial approach of the project, and at the request of Cisco Systems, our aim was to create a group of students with gender parity and being mainly young people (between 17 and 25). In the end, the group is formed by 19 people, of which only a woman, and with the following age ranges:

From 17 to 25 years old: 11
From 26 to 36 years old: 4
From 37 to 48 years old: 4

Quality assessment surveys will be held concerning the training and the coaching processes, both individual and as a group. We will also carry out a follow-up and evaluation of professional internships.

The labor insertion of each one of the students will also be followed via a telephone survey 3 months and 6 months after the training end.

The aim is the employability of all the young people doing the whole training. It is expected that 50% of them will be employed by standard companies and the rest by Fundación Trinijove.

At the end of this pilot project, we intend to use all the information obtained in order to reformulate the project and apply it to a larger number of young people. The aim is to become an example of good practices to be spread and enlarged in the near future with the collaboration of more companies and/or the public administration.

7. Conclusions

In order to face the new challenges of society and Third Sector organizations, alliances and collaborative work between universities, social organizations, private companies and public administration are essential.

The role of universities, and more specifically of research groups, in this process is to bring innovating solutions, generate new proceedings and evaluate and spread the results. Universities have a key role as facilitators of contacts between all the actors: social organizations, companies and administration.

The EJES research group goes for the creation of a technological curriculum for young people at risk of social exclusion, with the direct involvement of a network leading company, Cisco Systems. The combination of training certified by this manufacturer, professionalizing internships, and coaching ensures the employability of this particularly vulnerable group.

The aim is to carry out a thorough follow-up of the whole process, from the project design to the employability, in order to promote its diffusion and to widen this initiative to a larger number of young people.

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