

INTERACTION OF THE MEDIA LABOR MARKET WITH THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT: CHALLENGES VS GOOD PRACTICES

Assoc. Prof. PhD **Victoria BULICANU**

victoria.bulicanu@usm.md

Moldova State University, Republic of Moldova
Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences

Abstract: In recent years, the process of interaction between representatives of media institutions in the Republic of Moldova and educational institutions that train future specialists in the field has become increasingly active. This fact happens, at least, out of several considerations: the human resource crisis facing the labor market in the media-communication field, as well as the need for media institutions to focus on young specialists who have sufficient digital skills to integrate media content into various convergent platforms and who would allow the substitution of auxiliary personnel within media institutions. The effects of the human resource crisis began to be felt immediately after the pandemic period, when many employees of media institutions moved their activity online, launching individual projects capable of ensuring their existence, visibility, but also continuous interaction with followers in the virtual space, many of whom completely renounced their affiliation with the media institutions in which they previously worked. In a very short period of time, employers have begun to focus on the beneficiaries of higher education, understanding that the crisis can be partially resolved by hiring young specialists, even if, in some cases, investments are still needed from the institution to train young people. However, a clear advantage of integrating young people into the labor market is gaining experience in the field of journalism and information, directly, in the workplace, partial bearing of the costs for the preparation and training of the specialist by the employer, as well as a known fact - faster career advancement. In the case of the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences of Moldova State University, which since 2025 has also launched a dual study program, another advantage it offers to students would be the possibility of hiring them with a monthly remuneration, which cannot be lower than the minimum wage in the real sector.

Keywords: *crisis, human resources, dual education, mass media, professional skills.*

The activation of the interaction process between the professional environment, or as it is also called - the labor market and the academic environment, was based on several very obvious premises, born, first of all, from certain needs of media institutions, in the case of the field of journalism and information, which decided to try to solve them with the participation of the educational institution that trains the most of the specialists in this field - Moldova State University (MSU), Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences (FJCS). Among these premises are the following:

- ✓ the human resource crisis in the country's media institutions, which has deepened over the last 10 years, due to the decrease in the number of students admitted to the faculty;
- ✓ the involvement of the labor market in various professional training projects with national and international funding and the need to identify the trainable public, although most often this public was identified among students from specialized faculties;
- ✓ the approval by the Government of the Republic of Moldova of the legal framework for the initiation of a new form of education in higher education institutions - dual specialized education (DSE), and this included the study program 0321.1 Journalism and media processes.

Other fields that have been identified by the executive body of the Republic of Moldova with similar problems in terms of the human resource crisis facing the labor market and which, likewise, through the same Government Decision, have initiated a new form of dual studies are: 041 Economic Sciences; 061 Information and Communication Technologies; 071 Engineering and Engineering Activities; 073 Architecture and Construction. This form of study, at the moment, is seen as a possible panacea for partially solving the human resource crisis, which has dominated the field for at least 10-15 years, and we can identify several causes. Aligning the educational system with the requirements of the labor market is one of the priorities of the National Strategy European Moldova 2030. The strategy states that in the absence of significant natural resources, human capital represents a basic resource for long-term development for the Republic of Moldova. Human capital is, for the most part, the product of the educational system, it is mentioned in the document. By the same token, insufficient efforts to improve the educational system have a long-term impact on human capital and, ultimately, on the social and economic climate (National Strategy Moldova Europeană 2030, 2022).

According to the 2023 Prosperity Index (an index calculated globally by the Legatum Institute, which is a framework for assessing the extent to which countries promote prosperity and human well-being according to twelve pillars of prosperity), the Republic of Moldova ranked on the 52nd place out of 167 countries in 2023, and Romania ranked on the 54th in the Education index. This is also the best position that the Republic of Moldova ranks among all 12 pillars (The Legatum Prosperity Index, 2023).

According to this index, the Republic of Moldova ranks higher than Romania, but is considerably ahead of other Central and Eastern European countries, the Baltic countries and even Russia. Thus, awareness of the

importance of education and investments made in the educational system create in the future conditions for economic, social, cultural and political development suitable for all parties involved in the social act. Among the media institutions with which the FJCS had discussions in the 2024-2025 academic year about the human resource crisis in editorial offices and potential solutions for solving this crisis, the following institutions are in particular: TVR Moldova, IPNA Teleradio Moldova, TV 8, Jurnal TV, Ziarul de Gardă, Agora.md, Diez.md, Ecopresa – institutions that respect professional ethics and are signatories to the Code of Ethics of Journalists in the Republic of Moldova.

The signing of the Journalist's Code of Ethics by the partners in the labor market is a sine-qua-non condition for the realization of partnerships and collaboration agreements with the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences. A more active collaboration between the professional and academic environment also means advantages for both parties. Thus, the labor market identifies the following advantages:

- ✓ bringing students closer to the requirements of the media market for the integration of young specialists in the activities of creating journalistic content;
- ✓ training students in order to create journalistic materials, in accordance with the editorial profile of media institutions;
- ✓ adapting study programs to the requirements of the labor market;
- ✓ compensating for the human resource deficit within the country's media institutions by integrating young specialists from their student years;
- ✓ creating employment perspectives for young specialists (part-time or full-time), while meeting the requirements of media institutions regarding their level of training;
- ✓ direct interaction of students with employers, in order to establish the needs and expectations of both parties;
- ✓ creating strong bridges between faculties and the labor market to prepare students for their rapid integration into the activity process;
- ✓ strengthening the image of educational entities as promoters of educational innovation, attracting new partnerships and external resources (grants, international collaborations, academic mobilities).

Collaboration agreements are one of the most common legal instruments for institutionalizing and formalizing partnerships between academia and labor market representatives. Usually, these agreements take the form of a framework document, which contains possible

collaboration segments for all institutions with which a faculty, for example, signs these documents. In the case of the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences of the Moldova State University, this document contains the following areas of collaboration:

a) the scientific field, which aims at the cooperation, organization and participation of the “Parties” in activities, such as:

- ✓ conferences, debates, round tables and scientific seminars;
- ✓ development of methodological and scientific materials;
- ✓ publication of scientific articles in specialized methodological and scientific journals, etc.

b) the didactic field, which aims at the cooperation, organization and participation of the “Parties” in activities, such as:

- ✓ public consultations on the content of curricula, forms and methods of education in the fields of journalism, communication, public relations and advertising, internships;
- ✓ exchange of professional experience: support of cycles of lessons;
- ✓ organization of internships, laboratory classes, professionalization lessons, etc.;
- ✓ professional expertise and approval of activities;
- ✓ development of guides and methodological instructions, notes and course materials, curricula, etc.

c) the creative field, which refers to the cooperation, organization and participation of the “Parties” in activities, such as:

- ✓ master classes, workshops, summer schools, creative workshops, etc.;
- ✓ creative projects to produce materials for segments of the media system: TV, advertising agencies, public relations services, online journalism;
- ✓ profile competitions and festivals;
- ✓ volunteer activities in areas of common interest;
- ✓ internships.

We believe that the exploitation of these areas within inter-institutional partnerships brings added value and contributes to increasing the quality of the activities of a higher education institution with an audience that requires both curricular and extracurricular activities. At the beginning of the 2025 academic year, within the FJCS, MSU there are about 40 active collaboration agreements, within which certain activities are periodically carried out. The main object of the agreements, as a rule, is cooperation on the principles of fair partnership, transparency, mutual information and full cooperation of the entities

signing the agreement, in order to carry out programs aimed at improving student education. At the same time, exchanges of experts, consultants, researchers, teachers, students, as well as exchanges of information, promotional, didactic, scientific materials, etc. in the media field and/or in the field of non-formal education, continuing education and research between the signatories of the collaboration agreements are welcomed. A constructive relationship between academia and the professional environment must confirm that a good professional must be prepared by sharing responsibility for training and assessment between the university and the potential employer (through practical internships, professionalization lessons, documentary visits, etc.). Macari Ileana Oana in her book, *Educație profesională pentru integrarea pe piața muncii*, pays special attention to practical internships in the professional training of the beneficiaries of the educational act, mentioning that a special role belongs to the skills that facilitate employment: preparation for the job interview, capitalizing on practical experience and development, and effective communication in the professional environment. All of these, in the author's vision, will leave their mark on the successful integration of any young person into the professional environment (Macari, 2021).

The good relations between the two entities also represent an opportunity to strengthen the institutional dialogue between the academic environment, the labor market and government factors, through coordination mechanisms and continuous feedback. The two entities, through continuous dialogue, can ensure the balance between academic requirements and professional needs. At the same time, in the future, partnerships inspired by European models with representatives of the labor market relevant for professional training could become a sustainable pillar of professional training in the Republic of Moldova and a viable solution for harmonizing the relationship between the academic and professional environments. In the 1990s, researchers Loet Leydesdorff and Henry Etzkowitz developed a study *The Triple Helix* in the context of global change: dynamics and challenges which refer to the theoretical framework describing the interaction between University—Industry—State Government Authority. In this study, the researchers mention that the three sectors collaborate for economic and social development, each institution being involved, in its functions and responsibilities, equally, to obtain the expected results in promoting this collaboration model (Lawton Smith & Leydesdorff, 2012). Even though the same researchers later proposed other collaboration models, involving other parties, such as civil society or the ecological dimension, the Triple Helix model is one of the most promoted, especially in the Republic of Moldova, where the other dimensions still remain semi-active or not taken into account at all in these types of collaborations.

Among the collaboration models between universities, government authorities and the professional environment, which can still be promoted in our country, are the following:

- ✓ Inter-institutional partnerships, based on:
 - a) Consortia between the academic environment and representatives of the professional environment (e.g.: USM—Mediacor Digital Technologies Center);
 - b) Educational partnerships in the field of dual education (Government Decision No. 660 of 2024);
 - c) Incubators and science parks (e.g.: organizing Preinternship Bootcamp activities for FJȘC, USM students in 2025);
 - d) Advisory councils within higher education institutions (the existence within USM of the Council for Strategic Institutional Development, within which representatives of the professional field are also members);
- ✓ Partnerships based on public policy (e.g.: Collaboration Agreement between FJȘC and the Association of Environmental Journalists and Ecological Tourism to promote biodiversity and support for ecology in the RM);
- ✓ The emerging model based on promoting new trends in the training process (professionalization lessons, joint activities in laboratories, open collaborations between academia, the private sector and start-ups, etc.).

It is very important to understand that all these models less or more will always contribute to the improving of the students' competences and not only professional ones, but on developing their transversal competences, which are also very important for their integration on the labor market. In the book *Managementul resurselor umane* published at Poirom Editorial House by Pânișoară Georgeta and Pânișoară Ion-Ovidiu, the authors believe that the labor market, marked by competitiveness and the speed with which changes occur in all sectors of activity, increasingly requires adaptability, creativity and resistance to stress and effort from employees. And in order for jobs to be filled by the most performing people, strong human resources departments are needed, which can select the best candidates for employment, then help them accumulate all the knowledge they need and integrate (Pânișoară & Pânișoară, 2016).

We note that until recently, partnerships and collaborations between higher education institutions and the professional environment developed more vertically, emphasizing the leading position of the academic environment during that period, or in recent years, these partnerships are being exploited more horizontally, which gives them

balance, interactivity, reduced risks of failure and interest from all parties involved in such collaborations. It is very important to realize that the academic environment in the 21st century can no longer exist independently, distancing itself from the professional environment and focusing only on training activities. The beneficiaries of the educational process, that are students, first and foremost, today require, as a matter of course, the completion of the educational act with examples from the workplace. The learning by doing model of acquisition is more actual than ever and educational institutions must adapt to the new realities. The success of educational institutions, their popularity and their ability to endure depend largely on how quickly they manage to integrate the entrepreneurial model into their activity. Otherwise, they risk turning into closed and unpopular institutions, and the growth of the country's intellectuality would be at risk.

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