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CITIZENS JURY ON EDUCATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT

“Human capital is Europe’s most important asset”.
European Council, Brussels, 2005

In principle, it is possible in representative democracies that decision makers and experts are truly competent at making specialized policy decisions while the average citizen is under-informed and not motivated to cooperate. Deliberative Opinion Polling (DP) and other deliberative methods, on the other hand, are based on the assumption that citizens have knowledge and points of view which are worth taking into consideration in the decision making process. The Citizens Jury (CJ) is one of the oldest and most common deliberative methods. In the Kaposvár Region, both experts and the general public are of the opinion that the most acute local problem is unemployment. Therefore the discussion process for citizens was focused on the topic of ‘The Connection between Education and Unemployment’. At the first stage of the research process, participants were informed in detail about the most important questions concerning the labor market and the education system in the Kaposvár Region.

In this paper, I firstly present and introduce the CJ, the experts and participants as well as some results of previous stakeholder interviews. Secondly, I sum up the core ideas arising from expert presentations and the main points of relationship of the education system with the labor market in the Kaposvár Region. Following this, I review how the participants developed their own opinions on the most important topics and how they formulated distinct points of view on key issues. The article reveals the opinions of citizens who had sufficient time to digest information and to make well-grounded, thoughtful, informed and constructive decisions. Finally, I describe how participants evaluated the event itself.

AIM OF THE CITIZENS JURY

The aim of the Citizens Jury (CJ) is to ensure that citizens formulate recommendations to public officials and support decision-making by presenting their opinions. Additionally, the method also mobilizes and directs public opinion, supports social learning and achieves consensus, hence strengthening social cohesion. The method also provides an opportunity to articulate public opinion to a wider audience, hence strengthening the role of civil society. It facilitates discussions

between citizens and politicians and provides feedback to the latter about public support for their decisions. Additionally, the method popularizes a political participation and social discussion-based citizen model.

The central aim of the citizen discussion process is to achieve consensus in order to find a solution which is approved by all participants without reservation. The method is based on the acceptance and cooperation of the parties involved, since it serves the objective best if all participants agree. The preliminary assumption of the method is that well-informed citizens are able to reach well-grounded and responsible decisions, given that the decisions affect the lives of their own communities. The participants of the Kaposvár CJ made recommendations about how the needs of the labor market and outcomes of the education system should be consolidated, and hence how the employment rate in the Kaposvár Region could be increased.

Summarized CJ can deliver useful citizen input and commonly-grounded solutions to difficult problems, help in understanding public values, concerns and ideas, reveal what informed citizens want and why, provide respectful and focused public discussion and allow citizens to learn in-depth about a key issue (Jefferson Center, 2004, p. 4.; Király-Várnagy, in this volume).

THE KAPOSVÁR CITIZENS JURY

While the CJ practice has its own considerable tradition abroad it is still a novelty in Hungary. As indicated in the name of the method, it is based on the Anglo-Saxon concept of juries at court. This concept assumes that average citizens, after listening to various arguments, are able to reach objective and independent decisions on the subject matter at hand. Instead of the American terminology 'jurors' and 'witnesses' we use the terms 'participant' and 'expert' due to the criminal law connotations of the American terms. The members of CJ meet to discuss an issue of public significance. In the Kaposvár Region, both experts and the general public are of the opinion that the most acute local problem is unemployment. Therefore, the discussion of participants was based on the theme 'The Connection between Education and Unemployment'.

THE EXPERTS

The citizens took two days (21 and 22 June, 2008) to deliberate in Kaposvár and over the course of the process they heard from the following experts: the first speaker was Ms. Piroška Tárne Törzsök, a director of the Southern Transdanubia Regional Employment Agency Kaposvár Branch Office and Service Agency of the State Employment Service in Kaposvár. She gave an overview of the local labor market. The second expert was Mr. György Mártonfi, a researcher from the Institute of Education Research and Development. His specialty is the relationship between education and the labor market. The third presentation was given by József Varga, head of Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Somogy County and president of the Electronics Factory of Kaposvár. The fourth expert, Pal Juhász, is a Senior Research Associate at the Corvinus University of Budapest Institute of Sociology and Social Policy; although he did not make a presentation, he did contribute to the subsequent deliberation.

Experts were required to have a specific range of knowledge and a high degree of skill in the current subject of research, and great communication and interaction skills.

Firstly the experts gave a presentation and, following this, participants discussed with the speaker for a short time, and finally, after the expert left, participants expressed their own

opinions and comments freely. Discussions were moderated by Gábor Király and Réka Várnagy, researchers from The Corvinus University of Budapest, Centre for Empirical Social Research.

THE PARTICIPANTS

Jury selection was conducted together with selection of DP participants. Representativeness of the sample was based on location and other demographic variables such as age and gender. As a result of the survey, fifteen members were invited to join the CJ in Kaposvár. Four of them appeared at the meeting and another six – who were not in the original and representative sample – joined them later on, hence the total headcount was ten. It turned out later that one person could not participate in the CJ as they were unable to stay for the second day. Finally, the remaining nine members of the Jury prepared their recommendations during the discussion. All citizens were rewarded for their participation.

THE LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

We recorded numerous interviews with local stakeholders and experts which are relevant because local stakeholders can represent problems faced by other members of the local community. The stakeholders emphasized the importance of the subjects described below when talking about the problems of the small region and about the relationship between education and employment.

One of the local stakeholders mentioned that vocational training is of vital importance from the standpoint of employment policy, since those students who graduate or drop out from vocational training are most likely to be unemployed. Only half of those who were unemployed had finished primary school (or had even less schooling). Employment management for the undereducated shall be a top priority and the education system should be focused on producing employees in short supply in their professions¹. The Vocational Education and Training System is inefficient and vocational programs are not responsive enough to the labor market. They follow rather the profile of schools, and function according to the requirements of student's parents.

Experts emphasized that career guidance programs² should be developed as soon as possible. For career guidance purposes, in addition to the available Public Employment Service offices, an expert would be needed to continuously monitor the needs of employers. More responsible teachers at educational institutions would be also needed to support and advise students on career guidance and counseling and also monitor the labor needs of employers. Moreover, the role and responsibility of the media was considered to be of high importance as parents tend to orient their children towards known and fashionable professions.

Another local stakeholder noted that the number of jobseekers without qualification in the small region was high. Though they apparently want to work, many fail the entrance exams to various training schools. His suggestion was that jobs needed to be established for skilled workers in Kaposvár, while the expansion of local employment should be encouraged in smaller

1 Employees with the following vocational skills needed by employers in the region: carpenters, cabinet makers, bricklayers, electricians, CNC cutters, welders, flame cutters and ironworkers.

2 Career guidance that can be provided in general at schools, in the workplace and training centers is indispensable.

settlements such as various agricultural sectors (organic farming, fruit drying and processing). Many think this is the only way to increase local employment options.

Moreover, the Regional Integrated Vocational Training Center (TISZK)³ was mentioned as a new and highly-valued initiative in the region aimed at organizing vocational training in a highly efficient form. This center provides formal and non-formal vocational education and training, and follows closely and flexibly the needs of employers and the labor market while providing state-of-the-art infrastructure for education. This system can create the necessary environment for life-long learning for the entire population of the region. TISZK offers effective coordination of resources both at regional and at local level while reducing or even eliminating identical training events and courses, as its information brochure explains. It also increases the number of internships and in-the-field training events at large enterprises⁴.

Several schools have been closed in the region due to the declining birth rate. This was mentioned as a local problem. Schools have been closed even when studies have certified the high level of training provided by the respective institutions. This resulted in several conflicts in the region and in the long run will result in the migration of well-educated citizens from the region. As the mayor of Kaposvár mentioned, the city has its local university. However, this knowledge potential has remained unused so far. An information database should be set up at the University that can be used as a fundamental building block of a knowledge-based economy, and hence the creation of Research and Development potential is an urgent task for the region. He emphasized that the tutoring of young talents and retention of graduate workers is very important for the development of the region. These are the main objectives of the 'Graduates for Kaposvár Program'⁵.

A RECORD OF THE CITIZENS JURY

The following is a short summary of the presentations at the citizen's deliberations made by experts. We collected participants' comments that were closely related to our topic on the relationship between education and the labor market and in thematic groups and quote certain comments verbatim.

The first expert, the Director of the Southern Transdanubia Regional Employment Agency Kaposvár Branch Office and Service Agency of the State Employment Service (PES) Kaposvár, outlined the relationship between the local labor market and the education system in her presentation. The speaker displayed official data on registered jobseekers in the small region and discussed how the Kaposvár institution attempts to mitigate the problems faced by the unemployed. She listed to the jury professions and occupations for which too many people are trained and described how the relationship between the local and regional job market and training institutions has been formed and what the local educational institutions could do in order to make the region more appealing to investors. She summarized how the PES supports job-seekers, and mentioned that, according to 2006 data, most of the graduates registering at the PES graduated from schools specialized in commerce, catering, transportation, food processing, pedagogy, construction, wood processing and animal sciences. Furthermore, she emphasized that educational institutions and their operators are not in line with the needs of the labor market

³ Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centers (TISZK) were established in Kaposvár by integrating 8 training schools and have been fully operational since 2007. There are 16 centers in operation in Hungary and others are still to be set up.

⁴ György Mártonfi: First phase of setting up the TISZK system, Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development, 2007 Manuscript

⁵ Young graduates are helped to acquire real estate within a program supported by the mayor.

when launching a new course. She said that there is little or no connection between demand and supply. For this reason, it is necessary to set up close, organized and institutional cooperation between schools and employers. Schools do not have adequate information about the labor market while employers do not communicate (about their long-term future labor force expectations or more specifically about the skills they require). She explained that the quality of education could be developed by emphasizing practical training and by teaching about cutting-edge technologies and methods. In addition to a consolidated structure of vocational training, avoiding overlaps between the various institutions is also important in order to exploit the available opportunities more efficiently. Schools should be able to react more speedily to the demands of employers while more predictable economic conditions are also needed. The expert explained that strengthening career guidance and counseling is of extreme importance. Vocational training should be more suitable to the needs of employers, and in return employers should facilitate practical training events. Whilst all the necessary parts and information appear to be available for such changes, the pieces should be put together into a powerful and operational system – summarized the speaker.

The second expert, the Head of Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Somogy County and the President of the Electronics Factory of Kaposvár, talked about the relationship between education, employment and the economy. He summarized the economic changes in the small region before and after the change of the political system. The speaker explained that at the time of political change the local branch offices of large companies were shut down because the headquarters of most of the companies were in Budapest. In addition, he stated that companies with their roots and history in the region are successful and that new sectors cannot be started without roots. Companies still operating in the region (such as the Electronics factory) managed to continue to operate after the change of regime by diverging from the parent company. Local branch offices and other facilities were closed, because during privatization the new owners were not interested in further operation. Finally, the speaker told the jury that the crisis in the agricultural sector was mostly due to the devolution of the industrial sector. In the expert's opinion, instead of large multinational corporations that employ some 3000 workers, micro and small enterprises (MSEs) should be drawn into the region and could be provided with the necessary labor force. It is important to consider what kinds of tasks are able to be performed by the currently unemployed and graduates, and companies with profiles that match the pool of talent should be invited to the region.

According to the expert, during the insecure transition period after the change of regime parents preferred to send their children to secondary school or encouraged them to train in fashionable professions, even if jobs in that profession were not available in the region. On the other hand, no training in the steel industry was launched in the region, while turners, cutters, and welders were desperately needed. The expert informed the mayor that a supply of workers with these professions is needed and that corresponding training should be started and other classes closed to avoid over-education or duplicating efforts.

The expert is of the opinion that one important task is to map what kinds of professionals are needed in the region and that the operators, school directors, the PES and the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) should closely cooperate in the matter. Otherwise, due to the financing system, schools are encouraged to educate as many children as possible at the lowest cost. The current scheme is hard to change and the benefits of any changes should be expected only over a longer period.

The speaker said that the HCCI provided students with relevant information (e.g. various professions are demonstrated to children). The HCCI organizes factory visits and participates in the elaboration of education materials and testing material. Additionally, the HCCI publishes

information and tenders in its own newspaper and also on local TV channels. They suggest that a scholarship program for talented but poorer students should be introduced and the trained professionals that are the outcome of the program could be connected with various companies. Thirdly, the expert said, that the mayor was advised that herbal raw material production would fit into the tradition of the region and that the necessary workforce – involving many physical workers – would be available. Finally, according to the expert, the idea of the Regional Integrated Vocational Training Centers (TISZK) is excellent. However, transportation-related problems of students should be taken into consideration, as transportation infrastructure in some settlements is poor.

The third expert, a researcher at the Institute of Education Research and Development talked about the relation between vocational education and training and the labor market. In the presentation the needs of the economic actors, the anomalies of education supply and demand and the problems faced by those leaving the education system and entering the labor market were demonstrated. The expert covered issues such as short and long term economic objectives, the quality of education and the supply and demand of skilled workers. At the same time, the jury learned that we have no exact information about the magnitude of the short supply of skilled workers, because it is very hard to measure this. He said that some professions are in demand by the market and thus there is a supply shortage, while others (the more fashionable professions), are oversupplied. Numbers of the former are hard to track: employment statistics are tentative as gray and black economies comprise a considerable part of the labor market.

The researcher said that the standard professions in high demand are steel and construction workers. Professions in demand in the Southern Transdanubia region are welding, tool-making and plastics. An Annex attached to the OKJ⁶ decree of 2007 contains a list of professions in demand in each region. The purpose of the list is to assist vocational educational institutions to match their training to the needs of employers. Obviously, both parents and children are encouraged to collect important information about the labor market before enrollment at educational institutes. Educational institutions providing training for professions in demand are granted additional state support. Another frequent problem with professions in demand is that the job itself is often hard and the normal wage to be earned is often only equivalent to the minimum wage. The expert was of the opinion that these are the main reasons why people do not want to learn such professions, or, if they have already finished school, they do not want to work in the profession they are trained for even though there is demand.

On one hand, he said that schools failed to meet the expectations of economic actors. *Nota bene*, schools have many other important functions. On the other hand, he noted that economic actors are not able to communicate their labor force needs, hence the demand for skilled workers is extremely hard to measure and satisfy. Related forecasts are usually reliable for up to six months. The education profile is influenced by institutional interests and demands from citizens. Instead of counting on the past needs of the economy, schools should educate and train students to meet the future demands of employers. If there is no demand from citizens while economic need exists, positive changes could be achieved by making vocational training more appealing. This concept is also recommended by the European Union. As we know, the transition from school or training to work is becoming longer and more difficult. Development of general, social and learning competencies, language proficiency, IT competence and other professional competences is of essential importance. Instead of setting parameters for the output of vocational training (e.g. by stating how many bricklayers are to be trained) high quality education that creates flexible and trainable graduates should be provided. Some say that planning is necessary. In general, applied knowledge should be given to students.

⁶ National Qualifications Register

JURY DISCUSSION

Having explained the major issues covered by the speakers we review the major issues discussed by the jury (i.e. participating citizens). After each presentation participants discussed the various general and specific issues related to the topic, summarized the major themes and expressed their own opinions. Participants' quotations that follow are italicized.

Firstly, participants talked at length about the conditions for improving the relationship between education and employment. They emphasized that the unpredictability of the economy is a major challenge when setting up a framework for education and deciding the priorities for cooperation between educational institutions and actors of the labor market. They also added that under-development of local infrastructure is a considerable obstacle to development.

"While we do not have a strong national economy and a plan that outlasts parliamentary terms, instead of a situation where it is set by parties and party echelons, it is pretty difficult to say or discuss anything specific". Attila

"If we cannot guarantee a company for 20 years we definitely cannot guarantee education either". Zoltán

In their Jury's opinion, schools do not know what to teach and are not aware of the needs of the local economy.

"It would be great if companies informed educational institutions and employment centers about what kind of professionals they need". Margit

It is a common opinion that schools are not motivated to take into consideration the needs of the economy because of their financing structure, while economic actors cannot forecast future demand.

"Harmonization of the labor market in the Kaposvár region and of the tasks and roles of the Public Employment Service is an urgent and important task". Zoltán

Then, the participants placed emphasis on the responsibility of schools and economic actors. There used to be mandatory practical training at companies but now the students only practice in vocational training centers, they observed.

"During summer training we spent one week in a training workshop then we were sent to actual production facilities. One professional for two pupils – we worked both in serial and customized production. We worked, we learned and were paid". Erzsike

It was also agreed that shutting down schools may have an adverse effect on efficiency, especially in the case of primary schools. If there are too many children in classes at school, they will not learn how to study or think. The CJ members stated that it is necessary to develop Primary Level Teacher Training. It would also be good if companies announced scholarships for talented students in need, as they used to.

Next, career guidance and counseling were also discussed by the Jury. They commented that young children cannot choose their careers or professions responsibly; hence it is the responsibility of the parents and of the teachers to observe the children, discover their talents and support them accordingly.

"It is not granted that a fourteen-year-old can decide what to study, or pick a career for life. Parents and teachers should actively participate in the process. Teachers should tell the kids in a plain and

simple way that “dear, you might not be able to do this, let’s consider some other options as well”. Maybe they should not even pick only one profession, but two, so that one of the two would work for sure”. Margit

“Career guidance is a process which should be monitored closely during the entire period. The ambitions and affections of the children should be noted and the kids should be guided. They certainly should not be told where to go or what to study. I support my children and try to make them believe in what they can do. If they have self-confidence and endurance they can achieve anything, and there is nothing left to talk about”. Ilonka

However, teachers are not prepared to give good advice about career choices.

“I have a younger daughter who was told by her teacher not to study economics as she would not be able to graduate. But she did graduate from a university of economics and she has even gained several degrees. I really do not want to brag about her abilities but if I had taken the advice of the teacher I would have messed up her life for good. Teachers should consult parents separately, and ask them what they actually want for the kids and reach a joint decision”. Attila

In addition, it is much harder to collect up-to-date information in small villages about what to learn or what to teach. More information should be made available about schools in general and about the training and courses available and also about future employment perspectives. Professions and opportunities that may be available should also be made clear to the children as soon as is possible, but certainly before making career choices or commencing advanced studies.

“Teachers in a small village are not aware of the opportunities and are not familiar with the range of possible professions. If you have no idea what a technician is, or that such professions actually exist, how would you know to go to the respective school?!” Zoltán

“When I went to primary school, some people came from big firms and told us about their jobs”. Attila

“Kids do not know what different professions actually mean”. Ilonka

Furthermore, higher-quality education should be provided and more related professions should be taught in vocational schools and alternatives should be offered so that students would be able to adapt to different situations later on in life. In addition, the implementation of a scholarship system in vocational education would have great benefits.

Schools, children and parents should communicate about these issues using new communicational means. For example, schools could distribute DVDs about their establishment. Children’s career and vocational interests depend on the examples they see at home, from their own interests and from the influences of friends or the media.

“Such DVDs could also provide specific information about employers and companies and about specific jobs in the profession. So the kids could see that the DVD offers them really useful information”. Zoltán

“Financial support could influence career choices made by children through scholarships and various information materials”. Attila

“Career choices of children are influenced by the examples they see at home, by their own interests (sooner or later they have their own interests) and of course by their schools and friends. Impacts from

the environment count a lot. The two most important factors are the primary school, where teachers influence the children, and the parents of course. It is hard for a 14-year-old to make such important decisions. I think they need to be guided and advised". Margit

Finally, competence development was mentioned as a key issue. The jury was of the opinion that individuals should teach themselves and collect experiences by all means (e.g. through gaining summer work experience). Individual motivation and experiencing success were also considered important. Basic skills should be developed and generally applicable knowledge has to be taught (e.g. ICT skills and languages). Additionally, extra-curricular activities should be more focused on at schools.

"Individuals also have great responsibility about what they decide. What you can achieve always depends on you, if you learn diligently and pay attention to finding out what the situation will be 5 years later and to being able to make a living then". Ilonka

"Back in our time we worked every summer but things have changed. Now, we need summer craft camps to replace the summer work where children became familiar with various materials". Margit

"What kids should learn: languages, home economics, preparation for life, so they will play their part, information technology, practical hands-on knowledge". János

"If they have talent, if they want and like to do it – that's all that matters. They could not have made me become a tailor for I did not care. You need talent for everything". Zoltán

MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

The moderators asked the participants to summarize the most important problems in two groups (in sentences starting with: 1. *The greatest problem is that...* 2. *It would be the best if...* 3. *It would be helpful if...*) then the participants jointly elaborated their recommendations. The participants worked out and expressed together the following main points:

The greatest problem is that children do not learn to study in school and the quality of education is poor. On the other hand, the major problem is that unemployment is not handled adequately and there are not enough stable jobs.

Participants stated that *it would be the best if* teachers loved their jobs and the quality of education were higher. Similarly, *it would be the best if* there were less lazy unemployed, retraining were more focused and of higher quality and there were more stable companies.

Finally, *it would be helpful if* jobs were created instead of providing unemployment benefit, and if vocational training policy was harmonized with the needs of companies, and the road and railroad network were more developed.

JURY RECOMMENDATIONS⁷

“I will be glad to have participated in this project if our ideas are good and get accepted”.

As we know, the Citizens Jury process allows decision-makers to reveal what people think and to take their proposals into consideration in decision-making processes as a general rule. At the same time, recommendations and suggested solutions are not specifically addressed towards national or local politics, to local citizens or to local civil organizations since the participants are not fully able to differentiate between various scopes of activities, responsibilities or discretionary levels. The recommendations are simply made to someone at a “higher level”. However, we found in interviews with local stakeholders that local leaders regard the sources of the problems to be beyond their influence and expect someone else to deliver solutions.

The participants emphasized the need to structure an effective educational system. They summarized that some infrastructural developments are essential in order to increase employment.

As for *general suggestions*, the Jury recommended the building of more roads and highways, to make better use of the Taszár airport and to modernize the railway system. Likewise, it was recommended to undertake focused development in host settlements in order to prepare them for housing-related job-creation projects if needed, such as collaborating with local and regional communities in developments projects in order to realize environment and human-friendly investments, and coordinating all development activities on the regional level as well.

In addition, the Jury is of the opinion that assuring the fair and equitable functioning of a social welfare system is quite important. It is very important to provide allocations only to those only who cannot be held responsible for their current situation or to those who live in big families or where the income per capita is very low. As for children, school attendance should be as a compulsory requirement. The Jury suggested the provision of allocations to those unemployed who are physically capable of working only in the case that they carry out communal work and are willing to participate in training and/or retraining programs. They also suggested further development of the social welfare system in order to build capacity to find all those in need of help and to involve them in the system. They proposed that different authorities and institutions should manage all social benefits using a combined system in order to reach all who need help and to avoid duplicating support.

Finally, job creation should be supported in the region by the local governments through granting tax reductions and through central authorities providing non-refundable support for small enterprises which undertake the long-term employment of non-family members. It is recommended to Regional Development Agencies to provide regular and extensive information to local and non-local investors and entrepreneurs about local investment opportunities. They also should inform local entrepreneurs about actual tenders and provide assistance in assembling tender dossiers as well.

After that the Jury composed its specific recommendations. According to these, schools should prepare students for the job market by teaching them about national political and economic institutions so that they know their rights and obligations and the local economic situation. Moreover, schools should be motivated to employ expert staff and to provide continuous training for teachers and to inform students about career opportunities in different fields.

⁷ See also: Final Report of the Citizens Jury process in Kaposvár – http://www.uni-corvinus.hu/fileadmin/user_upload/bu/tanszettek/tarsadalomtudomanyi/szti/etk/CJ_report/Citizens_Jury_report_Kaposvar.pdf

We need to increase the quality of vocational training by developing it so it is coherent, focused, specialized and regularly updated. The Jury recommends supporting the possibility to gain professional knowledge as well as general literacy through vocational training involving complementary and analogous vocations. The Jury is in favor of more practice-oriented training, preferably outside of school workshops in local businesses, and of corporations accepting pupils as trainees. For this purpose they suggest motivating schools to improve the quality of their education (in vocational schools as well as in retraining programs) and including retraining programs in the normal educational framework to ensure that certificates have the same content and value as normal school certificates

Additionally, in order to support pupils in career-orientation, teachers and families have to cooperate in the education of pupils in order to develop a stronger sense of duty and love for work. For this purpose, it is recommended to show students and parents different vocations. Proposed tools: factory visits, contacts with experts and professionals, demonstration of new technologies, professional summer practice and summer camps in Hungary and also abroad. Moreover, they recommended to chambers, other unions and lobbies and to schools to cooperate in order to create more opportunities for on-site practice as well as to cooperate in case of tenders.

Finally, for tenders published in the educational field, it is essential to favor applications that support local employment and it is necessary to motivate companies and schools to apply together. Moreover, this cooperation could result in more effective practice-oriented training and facilitate access to modern technologies and machines for educational purposes and allow pupils to participate in value-creating processes.

EVALUATION OF THE EVENT

The participants of the deliberative weekend worked together in fifteen small groups in the Deliberative Poll (DP). Another additional group constituted the Citizens Jury. The average Group DP headcount was 7 individuals per group; in the CJ Group there were 9 people. Generally speaking, they all mentioned that the event as a whole was valuable in helping them clarify their opinions. It is clear from the question concerning the weekend in Questionnaire T3 that the participants found that the moderators headed the team competently and to the greatest satisfaction of participants; they did not influence the group with their own personal beliefs and covered all major aspects of the subject matter. The participants found the length of the discussions sufficient, the presentations very interesting and the briefing material mostly clear. Participants unanimously believed that members of the group articulated their opinions freely and other members were quite receptive to such opinions.

At the end of the projects, participants were free to express their opinions about the event and the CJ method:

“I had a great time. Thank you to all the organizers and the institute making this research. If you contact me again I would be glad to participate in similar projects since I have been the leader of an organization for 13 years and I can use everything I experienced here in my community. I do recommend this to others as well; it would be useful for everyone to do this research. I will happily tell everyone where I was and what I did. The process of the research was very well elaborated and I am glad I met all the people here”. Ilonka

“I never would have thought that this would be such a success, I had fun and I do not regret coming here. It was great and I learned a lot. Apparently the process was made up by pros, it was perfect,

exciting, interesting, and colorful and no one was bored. I recommend this method to everyone - it is really useful both for the organizers and for the participants". Margit

"I had a wonderful time and enjoyed all the presentations so much! We heard about things I had never thought about before. I never thought that we, everyday people, could help solving problems. I hope we could give useful ideas to somewhat reduce the problems. The process of the research was good and I liked that we discussed what we heard during the presentations. Maybe you should organize such citizens' juries to discuss other issues as well. You need good people and a good team to organize everything. The presentation, the speeches and coordination also matter a lot since we tended to divert from the topic". János

"I did not know anything about this project earlier but I enjoyed it very much. It was all very well organized. There were no empty slots and the presentations were excellent. I have already retired and it feels great to be asked about these issues. I always planned to do something to help my community when I retired so I could make others' lives easier. This whole projects perfectly fits my way of thinking and I can help not only those who are close to me but the entire small region. I will be glad to have participated in this project if our ideas are good and get accepted. The method and the process are good and necessary. If we achieve any practical results I do recommend this process to everyone. I have always been looking for means to communicate the problems of people. I always think of Tiborc⁸. I have almost written to a newspaper to ask them to listen to people, because we are suffering and things are not going well at all. Now, I feel that the bosses came to see the people and they listened to us. I am so glad we had the chance to work together!" Erzsike

CONCLUSION

The paper examined, through the presentations of experts, the main points of the relationship of education systems and the labor market in Kaposvár Region. It reviewed how participants developed their own opinions and formulated distinct key messages.

Having reviewed the objectives and themes covered by the jury we can see that several of the original objectives have been realized (Jefferson, 2004, p. 4). The method mobilized and directed public opinion, administered social learning and achieved consensus, hence strengthening social cohesion. The method also provided an opportunity to articulate public opinion to a wider audience, thus strengthening the role of civil society, and facilitated discussion between citizens and politicians and provided feedback to the latter on public support regarding their decisions. Additionally, the method supports the promotion of a citizens' model which is based on active political participation and social discussion. This method allows citizens to learn about key issues and facilitates social learning and dialogue between citizens and experts.

At the end of the two days, the participants were extremely positive about the process they had participated in. The method was a novelty for the citizens and most of them gave positive feedback about the focused, target-oriented cooperation and the presentations. They welcomed this new way of acquiring information and gladly experienced the productive atmosphere of teams.

Individual opinions confirmed that it was a positive experience for the participants to be actively involved in the preparation of the recommendations. The participants were motivated and

⁸ Tiborc is one of the characters in *Bánk Bán*, a Hungarian drama. He represents the 'little people' (the poor, the helpless and defenseless) before decision makers.

cooperative during deliberation and quickly found a way to work as a team under the assistance of the experts. The two well-prepared and talented moderators were also greatly helpful and guided the conversations successfully, supported everyone in explaining their opinions and encouraged participants to actively listen to each other.

It has to be noted however, that the selection of the topic of research was neither focused nor well-defined. In addition, the experts could not present all of the possible view-points, thus the citizen's recommendations are somewhat general in nature. Still, the relationship between education and the labor market proved to be a topic everyone appreciated and was interested in. The opinions and key points of local stakeholders were generally reflected in the issues they mentioned during deliberation and in their recommendations.

Issues with the homogeneity of the participants (the fact that, despite all our efforts, the older generation was over-represented) resulted in an over-compromised discussion. The professional quality of the information brochure sent to the participants was excellent. However, it was not as effective as expected since not all of the participants read it through carefully. Nevertheless, these brochures provided participants with the most fundamental information about the issues at hand and the presentations delivered by widely-recognized experts from all fields provided all necessary information.

The time schedule for deliberation was appropriate. However, for future research it is advisable to provide the participants with more time to prepare for the discussions and to understand their roles as well. The selection of experts was successful and the constant presence of the fourth expert, Pál Juhász, was very useful as he was able to answer the questions of the participants after the other experts left.

The dominance of career-choice related problems and discussion of the position of teachers in the process became apparent during the deliberation. The probable cause for this is that no school experts participated in the discussions. It is recommended to invite experts from each field related to any given complex issue, otherwise inadequately-presented fields may overwhelm the discussion.

Furthermore, vocational education and training-related problems were mainly discussed as being among the characteristics of the educational system. However, the other most frequently-mentioned topics were developing the quality of teacher training, the efficiency of adult retraining, reductions in the number of children in classes, the expansion of secondary and higher education, the depreciation of university degrees, the migration of educated labor force and education financing, etc.

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