Dynamics of intervention of the human resource manager within the context of mobility: Risks, challenges and opportunities[1]

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1. The dynamics of the labour/job market: tensions and contradictions

The structural changes in economics that occurred in the age of globalisation had a profound effect on the labour and job configuration in modern societies. The prevalence of neoliberal economic policies together with the crisis of the welfare state, the new international labour distribution, and the spread of information and communication technologies are just some of the factors that contributed to the crisis in the forms of social regulation of the labour market. This instability of the labour market generated the crisis of full employment, security and stability of paid employment and very noticeably social integration through employment, thus having multiple effects of social exclusion. As it constitutes one of the major problems of our days, the crisis in employment has drawn the attention of researchers, politicians and the media and the interpretation of the major trends is far from reaching consensus or being peaceful (see Morin, 1996). Out of the various theories that have analysed the theme[2] we find particularly relevant the approaches that deny the end of labour society and the extinction of its value in modern societies and point to the expansion of new labour and job modalities, based on new forms of exteriorisation, namely its diversification, heterogeneity and invisibility. For example, the increasing dissemination of flexible work and precarious employment as well as informal labour are more part of a logic of labour diversification and an apparent invisibility than a framework marked by the end of labour. Besides, it seems to be even more consensual among authors that the centrality labour/job has become structural and is structuring current societies even

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[1]   This researh was developed within the Center for Research in Education of University of Minho.

[2]   Several Portuguese authors have dealt with the theoretical revision and questioning of the various labour tendencies and perspectives. Among them we would like to point out the works of Freire (1993, 1997), Kóvacs & Castillo (1998), Kóvacs (2002), Rodrigues (1988, 1991, 2000) and Silva (2007).

if for opposed reasons: on the one hand their excessive importance nowadays "tends to subordinate the individual's existence and transform him at its rhythm" (Rolle, 1996: 12), and on the other hand its prolonged absence, specially in situations of un- and underemployment, tends to channel all the efforts to the condition of "social exclusion":

> "Growing un- and underemployment exist side by side with the rise of work duration and intensity, generating a duality between those feeling useless because they do not work or work very little and those who feel frustrated because they work too much and live very little" (Kóvacs, 2002:5).

At the same time that it imposes itself as a central phenomenon of social structure, work takes on multiple forms, losing its uniformity, its monolithic nature, to transform itself in a complex network of asymmetries and imbalances. Life styles of modern societies are no longer based on behaviour, idea and language standardization and synchronization, which are typical of centralized and hierarchical forms of organization but rather on the diversification and growing differentiation of values, family forms, company, work and employment organization. The rise of civilisation of *The Third Wave* (Toffler, 1984), with the development of information, communication and knowledge technologies generated profound changes in the relation between capital and labour. According to Castells (2002), as the concentration and globalisation of capital increase, the use of the decentralised power of networks is reinforced, converging into a meta-network of capital that integrates and regulates capitalist interests at global scale. At the same time, this new configuration of economics widens the distance between the meta-network and most employees, weakens work accomplishment and fragments its organisation, diluting its collective identity. This process of individualization and fragmentation of labour relations has had different manifestations depending on the level of development of societies, and their political and cultural specificities.

The growing globalisation of economics has had several polarising effects at the level of the labour and employment structure. We are going to point out some of these effects which have been mentioned in several studies and reports produced in the last years:

i) The economy is increasingly tertiarised and societies more and more dedicated to the service industry *versus* the persistence of a considerable number of economic activities

linked to industry and agriculture, which have been immune to modern technology and resist scientific innovations;

ii) The development, in some institutions, of decentralised and flexible organisational structures and as a contrast the structural and cultural immobilisation from most organisations that insist on keeping centralized, hierarchical and segmented morphologies, contrary to economic, social and cultural changes;

iii) Increase in qualifications of the active population, mainly young people, contrasting with a high rate of illiteracy of the elderly;

iv) Significant increase of the rate and levels of schooling of women, contrasting with their effective integration in the labour market and with the poor development of professional careers compatible with the profile of qualifications;

v) Proliferation of several "atypical forms of labour" (precarious, illegal, informal, flexible, partial, temporary) and a decrease of stable jobs promoting a professional career. On the one hand, a long line of people waiting for an undetermined period of time to enter the labour market and on the other hand a group of active people who are already professionally integrated are pressured into lengthening their time at work beyond the legal limits;

vi) Regional and demographic asymmetries are deepening as far as economic growth is concerned, which is associated with phenomena such as migrations, growing professional mobility and company delocalisation.

The process of transnationalisation of the economy and the growing internationalisation of capital generated not only the circulation and mobility of new professional profiles as well as a marked stratification and segmentation of the world of work. The feeling of loyalty to the organisation and the construction of organisational identity has weakened and fragmented, being replaced by a relationship of generalised insecurity, transitoriness and no commitment.

The human resources professional represents simultaneously the most visible face and *mask* of the new values and practices of the global economy. By developing his intervention in the organisation he tends to reproduce global management models, taking on the role of *spokesperson* of the principles of flexibility, delocalisation, mobility, insecurity, labour instability, risk and competitiveness. On the other hand, the localisation of some of these values demands the adoption of strategies of cultural recontextualisation by this professional, *masking* the dominant models with other *clothing* which is more

appealing to the professional identities developed at the place of work. Unveilling this double structuring feature of the human resources professional will allow us to think about the risks, challenges and opportunities that the current mobility context represents to this professional group.

2. Defining the field of empirical research

With this exploratory study we intend to identify in a specific area of intervention the professional/occupational profile required by Portuguese employers. The field of professional intervention we decided to analyse was *human resources training and management*, an area which is transversal to several degrees taught at different universities: Sociology, Psychology, Human Resources, Management, Economics, Law, and Education.

By trying to establish a dynamic relationship between *thought* (training profile) and *event* (professional profile), the main purpose of this work is to analyse and question the professional functions carried out nowadays in the area of training and human resources. The identification of the type and nature of skills required for the function allow us to understand the role, statute and the position of the human resources professional in a more restrict context of the company and the wider scope of operating the dominant models for managing organisations.

Adopting as empirical *corpus* of analysis the job advertisements published weekly on the *Job* page of the Portuguese newspaper *Expresso*, between 2006 and 2008, we made a content analysis based on a reading sheet previously designed for that purpose. The relevant data of each job advertisement in the general area of *human resources management* was recorded on the reading sheet and afterwards introduced into software for SPSS data processing. We selected a total of 410 advertisements published for twenty-seven months, from 7th January 2006 to 31st December 2008. Even though we are aware that the universe of advertisements selected during this period does not represent the real universe of the supply at national level, we believe that the characteristics of the sample, both from the quantitative and content point of view allows us to come to some important conclusions on the required professional profile by the majority of employers.

3. Global trends of the job offers in the area of *human resources management* in Portugal

The general evolution of the job demand during the last two years shows a growing rhythm of demand with irregular patches along the year (see Figure 1). Although the first months of the year (January and February) and the beginning of the summer (June and July) were the periods that showed a higher level of demand, August and December were the months with the lowest figures of the period under analysis.

If we analyse the dynamics of the demand during this period we notice that 2007 shows a higher average than the previous year (an average of 12 advertisements per month against 8 in 2006), reaching peaks in demand of 18 (January) and 19 (June) advertisements per month. This trend of an increase in demand is still evident in the first months of 2008, with a maximum in January, with a total of 21 advertisements. The data presented in Figure 2 allows us to work out the annual rate of change in the number of job advertisements, which reveals a trend of gradual increase, even though there was a slight decrease in the annual rate of change from 2007 to 2008.
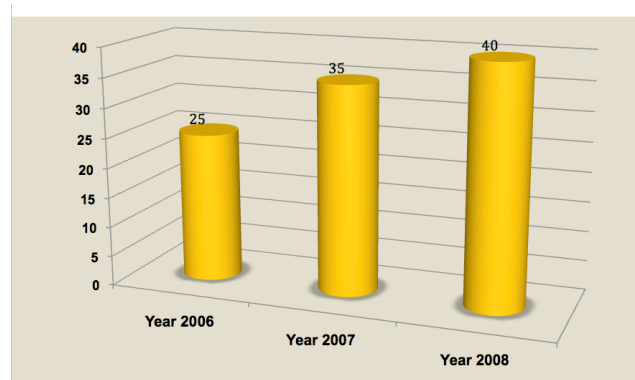
Figure 1
Evolution of the job demand in the area of *human resources training and management*
Total = 410 advertisements
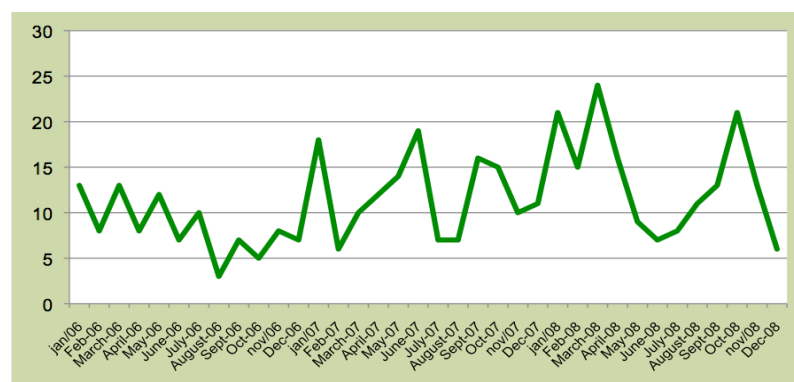
Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

Given this evolution the first question to ask would be: in the current context of economic crisis, marked by high levels of unemployment with a special expression at the level of graduates in social and human sciences, how can one account for the increase in job demand in this specific professional area? We will try to question this issue from the sociological point of view as we explore the meaning of other empirical data.

Figure 2
Evolution in job demand in the area of *human resources training and management* (%)

Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

Out of a wide range of functions or professions covered by this field of action we tried to find out which would have the highest demand by employers. If we analyse Figure 3, we will notice that there is a higher demand for *human resources technician* (34%), followed at a certain distance by *human resources managers* (17%). These two categories distinguish themselves by the nature of their professional responsibilities: while the technician's activity is limited to administrative and executive tasks, the manager integrates the functions of team and/or service supervision and coordination. On the other hand, the *human resources manager* (12%) has a position of running the department, taking on political responsibilities in the wider scope of the organisation. Even though in most of the cases we analysed the specific field of professional training (design, management, implementation and training assessment) constitutes one of the specific competences of the person in charge of human resources, we identified a large number of explicit requests (13%) for *training managers*, with higher figures than those for human resources directors and consultants. This observation reflects the growing importance and centrality that the area of professional training has gained in the scope of employers as well as the recognition of a certain scientific specialisation characteristic of this field of action.

Figure 3

Name of the function/position advertised by employer (%)
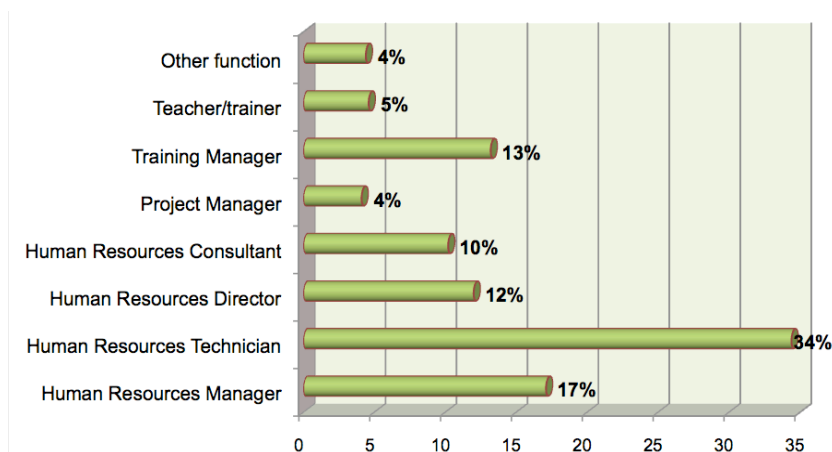
Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

When we try to find out what is the type of institution/organisation that asks for this type of professional we are faced with the predominance of service companies, which accounted for half the job advertisements (50%). Besides confirming the trend toward the service industries and tertiary sector of Portuguese economy, the data presented in Figure 4 also reveals the weight of consulting companies for job creation (16%), with similar figures to industries (16%).

Figure 4
**Type of institution/organisation advertising the job (%)**
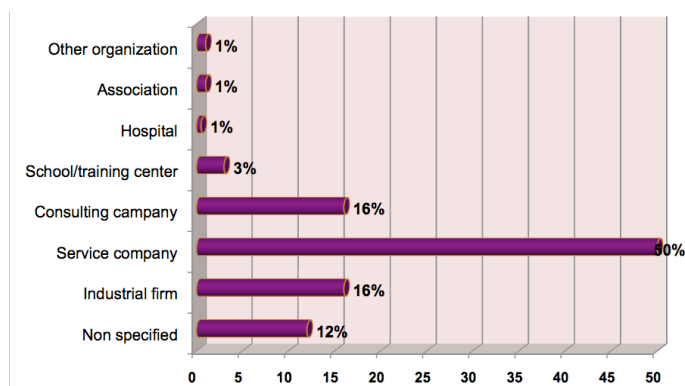
Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

The vast majority of job advertisements (73%) concern places of work in Portugal, with only a very small percentage concerning institutions outside the country (4%). One

should also stress a percentage of 5% recruiting professionals available to work in different places (in Portugal and outside Portugal).

Figure 5
Areas of the positions advertised (%)
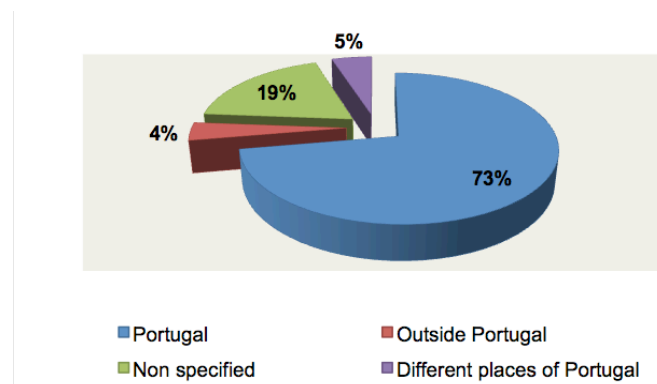
Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

The geographical areas that mostly promote jobs in this sector show a clear trend towards coastal and urban economics with a strong impact in the area of Lisbon and Vale do Tejo, which accounted for approximately half the jobs created (51%). The north of the country and the metropolitan area of Grande Porto only accounted for 14% of the total jobs.

Figure 6
Regions of the positions advertised (%)
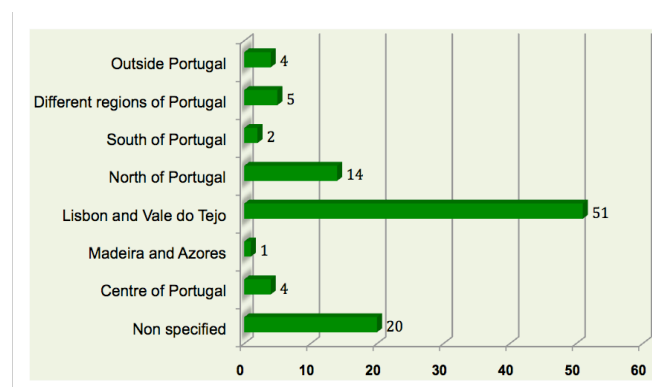
Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

If we cross the variables institution advertising the position and the place of work, a certain regional specificity of the economic activity is revealed: while in the centre of the

country most institutions advertising belong to the industry (43.8%), in Lisbon and Vale do Tejo service (50.7%) and consulting companies (21.3%) are the most dynamic. On the other hand, in the north of the country the job demand is higher in the service sector (48.3%) and in the industry (22.4%).

3.1. Qualifications and professional experience

From a total of 410 advertisements analysed, the vast majority (78%) requires a degree for admission. Only a very small figure refers the 12th year (3%) or a post-graduation (3%). When we tried to identify which was the academic profile that most employers required we noticed that most advertisements covered a wide range of possibilities within a degree in social or human sciences. In almost all advertisements the type of training required does not limit itself to one degree. On the contrary, there are two or three degrees mentioned as preference.

Figure 7
Level of education required (%)
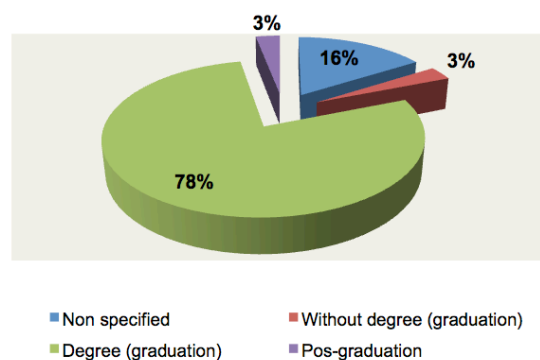
Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

Figure 8 shows the impact each degree had on the total number of job advertisements analysed. Thus, a degree in Human Resources is the preferred qualification (36%), followed by a general training in Social and Human Sciences (27%), which integrates any of the other groups represented in Figure 8. The nature of this data allows us to confirm the presence of a growing technical-professional specialisation inherent to this specific field of action, which more and more requires certain scientific knowledge, no longer limited to the territories of Law and Business Management. The growing

complexity, range and specialisation of functions that comprise the field of *human resources training and management* on the one hand and the growing variety of training profiles available in the market on the other hand, have had an effect on the demand, opening and adapting it to the supply available in a specific social-historical context. However, the degrees of Education and Education Sciences, which have a tradition in Portugal, constitute the exception to this openness, since only an insignificant number of job advertisements indicate a preference for this type of training profile.

Figure 8
Education required for the position (%)
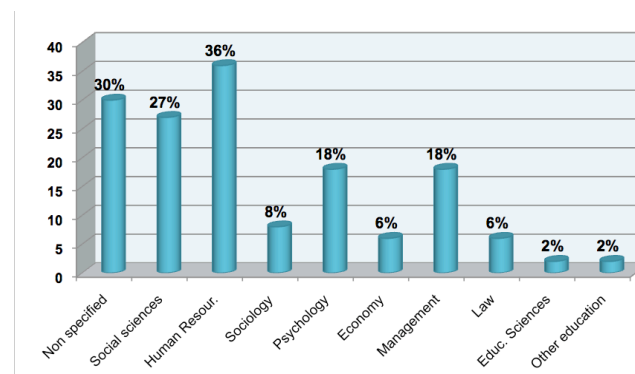
Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

A more detailed analysis was carried out to identify relationships between the position offered and the education required. The data recorded in Table 1 shows that the position of human resources technician is the one that mostly specifies the type of education required, as the 230 job advertisements distributed the requirements by four main degrees: Human Resources (84 advertisements), Psychology (38 advertisements), Management (34 advertisements) and Sociology (21 advertisements). More evidently, the advertisements for training managers required as qualifications a degree in Social and Human Sciences (23 advertisements), in Psychology and in Human Resources (10 and 9 advertisements, respectively). On the other hand, the human resources manager, director and consultant represent the positions that concentrate the qualifications on one or two degrees, namely the degree in Social and Human Sciences and the degree in Human Resources. We are thus led to deduce that the positions of human resources technician and training manager require interdisciplinary knowledge with special relevance to the areas of human resources, psychology and business management. The positions of human resources

manager, director and consultant tend to require more generic training profiles as they do not narrow down the range of possibilities.

Table 1
Function/position required by type of qualification

Position	Type of qualification										Total
	SHC	HR	SOC.	PSIC.	ECON.	MAN.	LAW	EDUC	OTH.	NSP.	
HR Manager	**19**	**30**	3	10	6	13	7	1	2	19	110
HR Technician	17	**84**	**21**	**38**	8	**34**	7	2	2	17	230
HR Director	**18**	**17**	1	4	1	8	9	1	0	18	77
HR Consultant	**21**	4	1	6	5	7	0	0	1	21	66
Project Manager	9	2	1	4	1	2	0	0	0	9	28
Training Manager	**23**	9	2	**10**	1	6	0	1	1	23	76
Teacher/trainer	10	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	10	24
Other education	7	2	2	2	1	3	0	1	3	7	28
TOTAL	124	149	31	74	24	74	23	7	9	124	639

Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

Legend:
SHC – Degree in social and human sciences; HR – Degree in Human Resources; SOC. – Degree in Sociology; PSIC. – Degree in Psychology; ECON. – Degree in Economy; MAN. – Degree in Management; LAW – Degree in Law; EDUC. – Degree in Education Sciences; OTH. – Other education; NSP. – Non specified

Among the institutions that create more job opportunities, serviced companies are the ones that specify the required degree most of the times, with a special preference for Human Resources (85 advertisements), followed by the degree in Psychology (48 advertisements), the degree in Social and Human Sciences (45 advertisements) and the degree in Management (40 advertisements). Industry tends to concentrate 46% of requirements in Human Resources (30 advertisements) and Social and Human Sciences (21 advertisements), followed by the degrees in Psychology (16 advertisements), Management (11 advertisements) and Sociology (9 advertisements). Consulting companies show a slightly different trend, with 20 advertisements for the degree in Social and Human Sciences, 12 advertisements for the degree in Human Resources and 11 advertisements for the degree in Management. Finally, about 50% of schools and training centres elected the degrees in Social and Human Sciences and Psychology as preferential for the position.

Table 2

Institution/organisation by type of qualification required

Organization	Type of qualification										Total
	SHC	HR	SOC.	PSIC.	ECON.	MAN.	LAW	EDUC	OTH.	NSP.	
Non specified	12	17	3	3	2	9	3	1	1	17	68
Industrial firm	21	30	9	16	2	11	5	1	1	14	110
Service campany	45	85	17	48	14	40	13	3	5	55	325
Consulting campany	20	12	1	3	6	11	2	1	2	29	87
School/train. centres	6	2	0	3	0	2	0	1	0	5	19
Hospital	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Association	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6
Other organization	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	6
TOTAL	109	149	31	74	24	74	23	7	9	124	624

Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

Legend:
SHC – Degree in social and human sciences; HR – Degree in Human Resources; SOC. – Degree in Sociology; PSIC. – Degree in Psychology; ECON. – Degree in Economy; MAN. – Degree in Management; LAW – Degree in Law; EDUC. – Degree in Education Sciences; OTH. – Other education; NSP. – Non specified

As for the place of work we noticed that the institutions in Lisbon and Vale do Tejo indicated a preference for candidates with degrees in Human Resources (87 advertisements) and in Social and Human Sciences (52 advertisements). The institutions situated in the north of the country revealed a preference for the degrees in Social and Human Sciences (20 advertisements), Human Resources (16 advertisements) and in third place the degree in Management (14 advertisements). In the centre of the country the advertisements concentrated on the degrees in Social and Human Sciences and Human Resources.

Table 3
Place of work by qualifications required

Place of work	Type of qualification										Total
	SHC	HR	SOC.	PSIC.	ECON.	MAN.	LAW	EDUC	OTH.	NSP.	
Non specified	23	30	4	12	9	18	4	1	3	22	126
Centre of Portugal	6	4	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	6	21
Madeira and Azores	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	4
Lisboa and Tejo	52	87	18	42	10	34	14	4	6	55	322
North of Portugal	20	16	6	13	4	14	3	0	0	17	93
South of Portugal	0	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	4	11
Different places	4	5	1	4	1	3	0	0	0	10	28
Outside Portugal	4	4	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	8	19
TOTAL	109	149	31	74	24	74	23	7	9	124	624

Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

Legend:
SHC – Degree in social and human sciences; HR – Degree in Human Resources; SOC. – Degree in Sociology; PSIC. – Degree in Psychology; ECON. – Degree in Economy; MAN. – Degree in Management; LAW – Degree in Law; EDUC. – Degree in Education Sciences; OTH. – Other education; NSP. – Non specified

A crossed analysis of Figures 9 and 10 reveals the importance of professional experience, resulting in the preferential age of the candidate to the position. Even though most advertisements (80%) do not contain information on preferred age, the requirements of most advertisements as far as professional experience are concerned (84%) end up by disclosing the estimated age of the candidate.
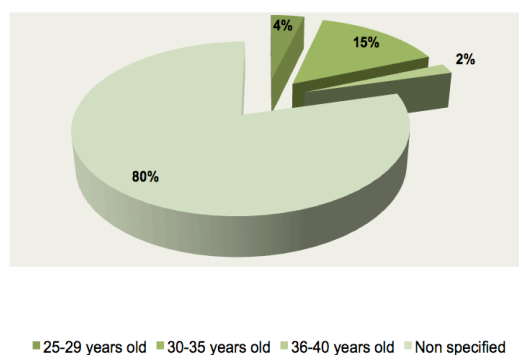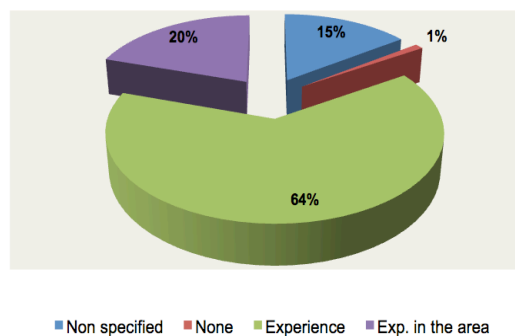
Figure 9	Figure 10
Preferential age for the position (%)	**Professional experience required for the position (%)**

■ 25-29 years old ■ 30-35 years old ■ 36-40 years old ■ Non specified   ■ Non specified ■ None ■ Experience ■ Exp. in the area

Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

Although only 20% of advertisements indicate as the main condition that candidates have previous professional experience but do not specify of which type, 64% of advertisements specify the minimum period required for the position. Thus, Figure 11 shows that most advertisements (44%) indicate as a condition for admission having 2-4 years of professional experience, and 14% of advertisements require between 5 and 6 years. The fact that professional experience is a mandatory requirement for all institutions and independently of the functions and place of work, it tends to exclude from the contingent of candidates a significant group of recently graduated candidates, who will inevitably contribute to increase the figures for qualified unemployment. It is therefore no surprise that these graduates make an investment to continue their studies, namely in post-graduations, while they wait for an opportunity to enter the job market. This panorama confirms the data recently published by the Foundation for Science and Technology, which places Portugal as the European country with the highest percentage of highly qualified workers between the ages of 25 to 34 (38.3%), some points above the European average (20.6%).

Figure 11
Years of experience required for the position (%)
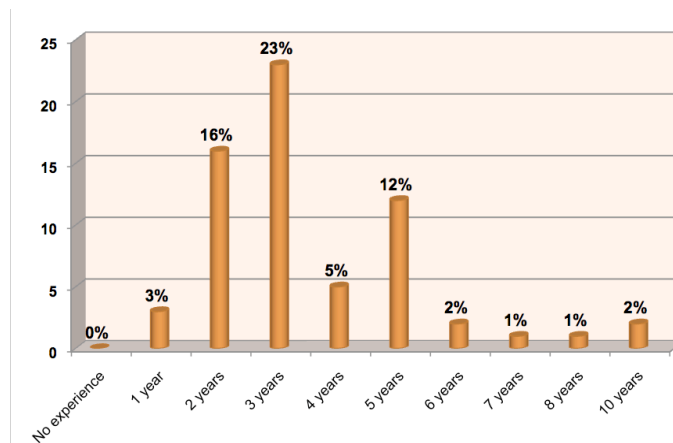
Even though there is a significant concentration of job demand in Lisbon and Vale do Tejo, in the north and centre of the country the advertisements analysed showed no demand as far as the place of residence of candidates is concerned, except in some specific cases (8%), which were almost all referent to areas further from the coast and in the centre of the country. As it does not constitute a preferential factor for recruitment, the place of residence becomes irrelevant, thus allowing for the range of potential candidates to be widened, as it does not exclude from these opportunities all the interested parties living in more peripheral areas of the country.

Figure 12
Preferential area of residence (%)
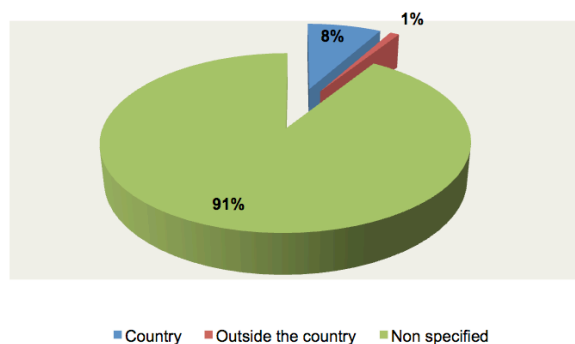
3.2. Professional profile required by employers

The identification of the most important skills for the current job market in the specific area of *human resources* translates the real needs formerly expressed by employers. Table 4 shows the final result of a laborious exercise of analysing and recording the contents of 410 advertisements under the form of a ranking of the most valued skills for this professional activity.

Although this is not the context to analyse the theoretical perspectives on the issue of skills, it is still important to indicate the existence of a variety of possibilities to rank this category in the corresponding literature. Generally it is possible to find a consensus when it comes to the conceptual distinction between specific technical skills for a certain position and the most generic skills with a universal and transversal scope. This general differentiation is thought to be sufficient for a critical analysis on the main trends and its relation with planning the curricula of the courses.

Out of a list of thirty-six skills one can conclude that the most valued characteristics by several employers are of the transversal and technical type, with the first being dominant. In fact, transversal skills not only got the first two places of the global ranking but also constitute most of the first fifteen places. This data confirms some of the conclusions of a recent project developed by Cabral-Cardoso, Estêvão and Silva (2006) on the growing importance of the so called transversal skills for the professional activity, indicating the value attributed by employers to each skill.

Table 4 gives us a picture of the type of skills which are most valued by employers. The grayed items are specific technical skills in the area of *human resources*. The five most valued transversal skills are respectively:

1) Konwledge of foreign languages (56.6%)
2) Knowledge of computers (51.5%)
3) Team player, leadership and team dynamics (30.5%)
4) Interpersonal relationships (26.6%)
5) Communication and negotiation skills, presenting and defending ideas (26.6%)

Table 4

***Ranking* of most required competences for this professional activity**

Nº.	Competências exigidas	fi	%
1	Knowledge of foreign languages	232	56.6
2	Computer knowledge	211	51.5
3	Training design, management and assessment	172	42.0
4	Team player, leadership and team dynamics	125	30.5
5	Recruitment and selection	120	29.3
6	Budgeting and human resources policies	115	28.0
7	Interpersonal relationships	109	26.6
7	Communication and negotiation skills, presenting and defending ideas	109	26.6
9	Availability to travel	102	24.9
10	Performance /skill management	100	24.4
11	Labour law /code of labour	98	23.9
12	Career and contract management	94	22.9
13	Proactive personality, dynamic spirit	91	22.2
14	Organisation and planning skills	90	22.0
15	Innitiative and entrepreneurship	87	21.2
16	Payroll, incentives, benefits	86	21.0
17	Project planning, management and leadership	77	18.8
18	Sense of responsibility and ethics	75	18.3
19	Administrative support (control of absences, sick leave, social report of the company)	63	15.4
20	Company culture and environment (values, employee integration, internal communication)	54	13.2
21	Professional development programs	52	12.7
22	Flexibility, capable of adapting to new situations	51	12.7
23	Updated CAP certificate (Trainer certificate)	50	12.2
24	Knowledge of organisational models and change management	47	11.5
25	Autonomy and self-sufficiency	39	9.5
26	Function analysis and qualification	31	7.6
26	Strategic vision, intuition and functional analysis	31	7.6
28	Other: driver's license and own car	30	7.2
29	Health and safety at work	26	6.3
29	Preparing applications /financing	26	6.3
31	Capacity to work under pressure/ stress	21	5.1
32	Determined, enthusiastic, young spirit	17	4.1
33	Market research	12	2.9
34	Does not specify	8	2.0
34	Passionate for the search of knowledge	8	2.0
36	33. Persistence	6	1.5
37	34. Resilience	2	0.5

Source: *Job* pages of the newspaper *Expresso* (January 2006 - December 2008)

When we compare these results with the conclusions from other studies developed in the United Kingdom, such as Fallows & Steven (2000), McLarty (2000), or Greenam and others (1997), or even with a national project coordinated by Cabral-Cardoso, Estêvão and Silva (2006), we notice similar trends at the level of communication skills, team work and knowledge of information technologies. On the other hand it should be noticed that knowledge of foreign languages obtained the first place of the ranking of our study with 56.6% and the above-mentioned studies do not indicate the same importance. This fact may be specific to this field of action, as some of the most structuring functions such as the area of professional training require excellent knowledge of foreign languages, mainly in the context of multinational companies.

The five most valued technical skills by employers were the following:

1) Training design, management and assessment (42.0%)
2) Recruitment and selection (29.3%)
3) Budgeting and human resources policies (28.0%)
4) Performance / skill management (24.4%)
5) Labour law /code of labour (23.9%)

4. The politics of the human resources area

In a context marked by flexibility and labour precariousness, delocalisation and mergers, downsizing processes and staff rotation, the area of human resources management takes on a new central role, since it has become an important mediation link of all these changes. In the current context of economic modernization, the person in charge of human resources is the most visible face of the policies of economic rationalisation, as he is responsible for establishing, carrying out and running policies of staff administration, including selection and recruitment of new employees, performance assessment and career management and reasons to lay off staff. Situated in a kind of structural crossroads of the system, the human resources manager can either act to reproduce it or generate its fragmentation. This position, which is simultaneously strategic from the political point of view and functional/operational from the point of view of development of the organisation, may be the reason for the increase in demand for human resources professionals witnessed in the last years in Portugal.

The meaning of the global trends pointed out in this work as far as the professional profile required by employers in the field of human resources raises some fundamental issues, as follows:

1) On the light of the current economic climate, marked by the global changes already mentioned, what is the position and function of the professional of human resources training and management?

2) How suitable is the professional profile required by employers in view of the new challenges faced by modernity? What values, principles and political and ideological guidelines comprise the professional profile required b y the current job market?

3) What is the role of educational institutions for the creation of training profiles?

The current position of the human resources professional is nothing but paradoxical. On the one hand, it gains an unprecedented importance in the economic environment, by becoming a fundamental *anchor* for the daily administration of organisations, mainly due to the need to regulate the intense mobility of the labour force, (re) adapting it to the workplace. On the other hand, and in an opposite sense, that importance ends up losing political value as the decision powers of this professional also diminish due to a world hegemonic power that sustains globalised capitalism. In fact, the human resources professional ends up having its scope of action reduced to more instrumental and mechanical functions, such as personnel recruitment and selection, contract and career management, management and assessment of training projects, among other tasks of eminently technical and functional nature. In this sense he becomes a fundamental piece for the political and ideological legitimation of the new global order.

As a privileged vehicle of the culture of new capitalism, the human resources and training professional ends up becoming the real doer of the *cultural ideal* required by new employers, which, according to Sennett (2001, 2006) is mainly based on three aspects: time (capacity to manage short term relationships, improvising life's course), talent (valuing potential rather than the acquisition of skills that become outdated), and renouncing (capacity for detachment as far as the past and past experiences are concerned). In fact, the guiding principles of the selection and recruitment process, of career and performance management will not cease to translate these dominant values, some of which have been transformed by the media and even by some technical literature in authentic management doctrines. The values of rationalisation, concentration, competitiveness, flexibility, precariousness and mobility refer to a matrix of management that seriously restricts the development of a democratic citizenship with an organizational base.

If we believe that the main challenge of modernity resides in the capacity of societies to react convergently to the neoliberal paradigm dictated by economic globalisation, even questioning the trajectories of social democratisation, then the professional profile required by employers seems to meet that imperative. Valuing transversal (team player, leadership and team dynamics, interpersonal relationships) and technical skills (training design, management and assessment, budgeting and human resources policies, recruitment, career management, contract management) (see Table 6) clearly and unmistakably reflects the assumption of the values of the new capitalism. In

other words, having those skills constitutes a fundamental condition to deal with the challenges imposed by the dominant economic ideology.

However, if we consider a challenge the fact that societies develop resistance, recontextualisation processes against the hegemony of the dominant trends, safeguarding cultural features and creating conditions for the development of the democratic citizenship, then the most valued profile of the professional of training and human resources seems to be a misfit in the scope of this objective. The type of skills which are more valued by employers tends to stress the technical-mechanical domain more and to give less importance or even exclude the political and strategic domain inherent to the position of training and human resources management.

Despite the diversity of management and work organisation models existing in the Portuguese economic environment, the adoption of centralised and bureaucratic models and practices of organisational management seems to predominate in the north of the country, with the prevalence of organisational cultures based on authoritarian values, on Taylor visions, on guidelines that favour the cult of the specialized division of work, and finally on logics that rationalize human labour (see Estêvão, Coord.; Gomes; Torres and Silva, 2007). These cultural features established in organisations reflect the existence of professional identities with strong roots in certain work contexts, which are reluctant and resistant to the acceptance of innovation strategies and to the assertion of new global values (Torres, 2001, 2004). The incorporation of these new values will require that innovation is considered "a dynamic process of continuous improvement that requires a learning culture, intra and inter-organisations (Kóvacs, 2000: 38). Both the democratic and polarized cultures based on occupational subcultures which are not in line in terms of strategic guidelines, tend to block and obstruct organizational learning as well as the creation of collective attitudes, which favour change.

The new cultural model that is supposed to be instituted at world level, based on the short term, on the potential skills and renouncing the past (Sennett, 2006), represents a significant contrast with the culture of organisations where, in fact, employees need a life history that gives sense to their existence, makes them feel proud of their skills in a certain area and values the experiences they have lived. With a great moral and standard impact on the management and business administration modes of organisations, this model ends up becoming an instrument of modernity, even though its implementation faces phenomena of cultural resistance.

It is precisely at the structural crossroads of this contradiction between two cultural axes — the *cultural ideal* with a global scope and the organisational culture of a national type — that we need to reposition the functions of the human resources manager. The impact that certain external conditions have on the dynamics of labour and employment may be regulated at the level of the organisation by means of the adoption of a strategic and political project shared collectively by the administration and management of organisations. And in this case the human resources professional, the mediating face of the relations inside-outside/global-local/top-base can develop a political and strategic position of great importance for the development of a more democratic culture.

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