



D&I@JOBS

INCLUSIVE JOB DESIGNING FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Validation workshop

Summary report:

Piloting of job carving as supportive tool in the social mentoring

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The analysis, results and recommendations in this study represent the opinion of the author(s) and are not necessarily representative of the position of the donor of the project.



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1 BACKGROUND TO THE IDEA OF ‘JOB CARVING’

The concepts of workplace diversification and inclusion have been on the rise for the last decade. One of the main reasons for such a shift into understanding companies and internal culture has to do with the fact that diversity allows a business to access new, mostly overlooked workforce, adapt to changing circumstances more adequately, expand into new markets and cultivate new avenues of doing business and responding to adversity. Diversity in this sense is more than just a buzzword or ‘a mosaic’ concept. It is rather the inclusion of a wide range of individuals who come from different backgrounds and provide additional insights into the human experience.

Creating a supportive environment for diversity and inclusion takes time, engagement and skills. In today's world of workforce shortage, employers are challenged to look in a niche of the workforce who may not be the perfect ‘ready-made’ candidate but who with the right support and guidance can add value to the organisations and the businesses, in a sense of profit, productivity, better ideas and strengthened relationships and cultivated inclusion. For those businesses interested in understanding how internal structures and organisational processes can be accommodated and customized to fully utilize the capacities of the workers from a vulnerable background in a business-like job place, ‘job carving’ and ‘job crafting’ open a pathway to practice inclusion and diversity at the workplaces.

The most significant investments that people, businesses, and governments can make in the changing nature of

Workforce shortage: a cross-country transferable challenge

The European Commission set the year 2023 as The European Year of Skills. It aims to ‘*help companies, in particular small and medium enterprises, to address skills shortages in the EU. It will promote a mindset of reskilling and upskilling, helping people to get the right skills for quality jobs*’.

The world of work is changing profoundly. Data from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) shows that on a global level, wage and salaried employment (standard contracts) accounts for only about half of global employment and fewer than 45% of them are full-time workers. The standard employment model is less and less representative of today's world of work since less than one in four workers is employed in conditions corresponding to that model. The COVID-19 pandemic, dramatically quickened the pace of employers relying on machines and algorithms to perform tasks, with many businesses automating more jobs to combat labour shortages and increase profits. Increasing automation and the expansion of telework opportunities affect populations underrepresented in the labour force, not limited to PwD in different ways. In response, public policies are getting creative and focusing on an inclusive economic recovery to maximize workforce participation. The job carving is one tool in that respect.

work are in enhancing human capital. Human capital is important because there is now a higher premium on adaptability. The Human Capital Index (HCI) in 2020 in North Macedonia was 0.56. The index is measured in terms of the productivity of the next generation of workers relative to the benchmark of complete education and full health. The index means that a child born in North Macedonia today will be 56 percent as productive when s/he grows up as s/he could be if s/he enjoyed complete education and full health. The 2020 score informs that in the country's economy, the average worker achieves only half of their full health and education potential. This is lower than the average for Europe & Central Asia region and Upper middle-income countries. Between 2010 and 2020, the HCI value for North Macedonia increased from 0.54 to 0.56.¹ This poses a challenge to the future productivity of workers and the future competitiveness of the economy.

A recurring debate in North Macedonia is the paradox of the lack of workers to fill in open job vacancies and the high unemployment rates, especially among people with vulnerable backgrounds. The country has had a long and

¹ World Bank (2020) North Macedonia Human Capital Index 2020 [online document] Available at: https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext/download/hci/HCI_2pager_MKD.pdf [20.09.2023]

persistent battle with unemployment, ranging from 22.4% in 2017 to 14.4% in 2022.² Long-term unemployment is a considerable problem for the country and a key employment challenge in creating jobs. Almost half of the unemployed people are still unemployed after four or more years (47.1% in 2019 and 50.5% in 2021) and persistent unemployment is increasing. On one side, in September 2022, the Vice Prime Minister of North Macedonia speaking at the OECD conference 'Human Capital Flight–Shaping the Future Together' noted that 93% of unemployed persons in the country are functionally illiterate meaning they lack the skills required in the labour market. On the other side, the import of foreign workforce is seen as a solution that could mitigate workforce shortage and alleviate economic progress. It is apparent that a link to enable employment pathways for the current human capital in the country is missing.

2 WHY LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF THE MENTORS INVOLVED IN SOCIAL MENTORING?

Mentors are one of the key contributors to understanding the real-time application challenges of the work integration services and their potential to increase employment outcomes (find and retain employment) for people from vulnerable groups. More so, the experience with the job carving as a supportive tool in the social mentoring process sheds light on the necessary adjustments and calibration that both the social mentor (and the programme of mentoring as such) and the employer need to do so that finding and retaining employment is a feasible and sustainable task. These sources of knowledge are necessary for the mainstreaming and institutionalisation of employment pathway support services to people from vulnerable backgrounds who challenge the concept of work stereotypically systematised in job classification, tasks, hierarchies and division of labour. The interrelation between social mentoring and job carving can be a promising practice in the decentralised systems of services (e.g. innovative or specialised services), support structures as part of the legal framework supporting employment for persons with disability (e.g. work assistant) and/or as part of the active labour market policies or any legal framework focused on unemployment reduction. The opportunity to learn from the social mentors involved in the social mentoring and job-carving process can offer several important lessons in how to improve the approach, not limited to the influx of new ideas and creativity flow, refining the education programme and the fundamentals of both the training for social mentors and job carvers and the tools supporting these two approaches, develop and model positive traits of the job experts and their supportive system.

3 METHODOLOGY OF ASSESSING THE OUTCOMES OF THE JOB CARVING PROCESS

Evaluation/assessment of the learning from the real-time practice of the job carving as a supportive tool in the social mentoring with different target groups and different local settings has an end-result to improve the design and performance of this approach. As such, the primary goal of this piloting and the summary report is knowledge

² State Statistical Office (2023) Activity rates of the population aged 15 years and over by gender and age, annual, by years. [online database]. Available at: [https://makstat.stat.gov.mk/PXWeb/pxweb/mk/MakStat/MakStat_PazarNaTrud_StapkiDrugilIndikator/006_PazTrud_Mk_aktivnost_ml.px/table/tableV](https://makstat.stat.gov.mk/PXWeb/pxweb/mk/MakStat/MakStat_PazarNaTrud_StapkiDrugilIndikator/006_PazTrud_Mk_aktivnost_ml.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?xid=46ee0f64-2992-4b45-a2d9-cb4e5f7ec5ef)
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building, which is as important as the results themselves. The generated knowledge can be used to develop and test new strategies within the social mentoring with greater potential to succeed.

Key questions of interest to this report are:

- **How job carving capitalises on social mentoring so that the beneficiaries find and retain employment?**
- **What are the objective and subjective impacts of participation in the job-carving process for the beneficiaries?**
- **What is the needed extent of the employers and the immediate environment of the beneficiaries in supporting the employment of vulnerable groups?**

The piloting of the job carving included six mentees from vulnerable groups who were mentored towards employment over a period of six months. The real-time implementation happened in the period September 2023 – March 2024. The assessment used a non-experimental methodological approach. It is an evidence-based approach, synthesising primary qualitative data gathered in the course of the real-time application of the job carving. Thus, each mentee involved in the mentoring process is coded and data is gathered on their exit from the programme via a semi-structured narrative evaluation assessment provided by the mentor. Exit data is gathered in March 2024 and the report is based on that data.

4 PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE PILOTING

The piloting involved mentoring six individuals on their employment pathway utilising job carving as an additional tool in adjusting and accommodating potentials and limitations in the job design/implementation process. Three men and three women were mentored, the youngest being 19 years, two being 20 years old, one being 29 years, one being 40 years and one 47 years old. The younger mentees lived with their parents while those 40 years old and over alone with no immediate family support. One mentee had a personal assistant- public service allocated to a person with disability.

Five mentees were persons with disability (one hearing impairment and four with intellectual disability) and one mentee had a mental health issue – struggling with depression.

The mentees lived in three cities in North Macedonia, namely, Skopje, Kumanovo and Bitola.

They were mentored by professionals who have experience in social mentoring (social mentors) and who were trained in job carving so that they can act as inclusion mentors in the workplace. During six months, the mentors had direct regular (at least once per week) sessions with the mentees, engaged in communication with potential employers and developed a job carving plan that allowed adaptation to the job description. One of the job carving plans required minimal intervention and the mentor focused on building new styles of communication within the group of co-workers of the mentee. Two plans were fully adapted to the capacities, limitations and potentials of the mentees. One plan will be developed in April as soon as the mentee starts working. For one mentee the plan was not developed as the mentee did not shift from training into employment. All plans were created in close communication with supervisors (professional mentor) on the job place.

Following are presented the main findings from the mentors' assessment of the job carving process.

4.1 Major achievements in the job carving process

For all of the mentees, these were their first stable work-related experiences. Only one mentee has had infrequent informal work engagements (loading-unloading truck). The rest had no prior work experience and had never used any type of service to enhance their employability or devise a structured employment pathway that capitalized on their potential but also reflective of their limitations.

Through the mentoring, two mentees were employed in a private company (sheltered workshop for people with disability), one is awaiting work engagement utilising the local labour active measures, another is awaiting employment in a private company extended due to technical documentation, and one had an opportunity to get on-job training lasting for three months as a pathway towards sustainable employment. Only one mentee was unemployed after the mentoring period, although the mentee started with job training but did not meet the job tasks and requirements. These mentees were supported by a job carving plan that adapted the workplace to their capacities and potentials, accentuating the types of support needed and the field of future development for the mentees in the organisation.

The mentoring accentuated the life skills of independence of mentees. It pinpointed their responsibility and active engagement in finding a suitable job but also retaining the job, which in many cases were at risk of termination. Trustworthy and empathetic relationships between mentors and supervisors at the workplace enabled timely address to all challenges arising in the job adaptation process.

Personal independence, greater attention to physical appearance, self-care and advocacy for integrity were less tangible outcomes of the mentoring process. Proactivity, being aware of their own shortcomings and working to improve them made the mentees more independent and regained control over certain decisions in their lives.

“Namely, at the first meeting, the person came with her parents, with a downcast look, very little communication and a medium-good external appearance, so that during the process, she first of all improved mentally, began to pay more attention to her external appearance, has good communication, she comes alone to the meetings and independently carries out the tasks that we do within the framework of the process. Furthermore, she has a very strong will and motivation to make the whole process successful, because she is aware of the benefits it will have for her personally and for the process with her child. The therapy she is currently taking has been reduced and it no longer makes her drowsy and slow when performing certain tasks. You can see a smile on her face, positivity and enthusiasm, and on the other hand, fulfillment from the engagement she has. My impression is that she is a completely different person from the first day I met her even today.” – noted a mentor.

4.2 Main catalysers of the mentoring and the job adaptation

The readiness of the mentee for entering into this process, but also the wider circle of support from the immediate family environment seemed critical both for the mentoring process, the employment stability and the strived autonomy of the mentees. Mentors accentuate the need to engage parents of persons with disability in the mentoring process. The clear understating of what kind of employability enhancement process are their children (now adults) going through gave a boost to the work of the mentors, fortified some of the advice given by the mentors and enabled the maintenance of professional boundaries.

“Through regular conversations with them, I encouraged them as a mentor to give support and believe in the process and let the mentee try new things because the work responsibilities that were offered were safe and did not threaten his security at all” – noted a mentor.

Yet, families can easily overstep their boundaries, mostly out of unconditional love and responsibility for their children. Overprotective and shadowing parents were not always genuine partners to the mentors.

“The parent wanted to have much control of the process, there was insufficient trust in the mentoring and a constant need to step in even when not called upon. I tried to point it out, but the parent didn't stick to the original

agreement. The parent was constantly harassing the company and in the end, may have influenced them not to continue the job training’ – noted a mentor.

Finding an empathetic and supportive working environment is also a challenge. Those mentors that have established such relationships with the employers were able to carve out adaptive plans for the mentees without any negative impact on the working process, shaped and installed in their mentees new styles of professional communication, further positively influencing the change process of the mentees. With proper guidance, the employers vested trust in the caring process set out by the mentors and enabled its implementation in the working process.

“The company's openness to cooperation and their willingness to be involved in the process of its adaptation was of great help to the employment process” – noted a mentor.

“I think the involvement of the parent in the process was very helpful. The parent was involved in a constructive and controlled manner and exactly when s/he should be, so I can say that all three of us participated in the process. Also, the supportive environment in the business, where the employment is foreseen gave my mentee additional motivation to want to work in general, and thus to work for them” – noted another mentor.

Understanding the legal framework of social rights to vulnerable groups, and knowledge about the local active labour market measures catalysed better navigation through the legal and social system for the benefit of the mentee and also the potential employer.

4.3 Strong sides of the contact and the mentoring

All social mentors accentuate that the contact with the mentees is characterised by cooperativeness, openness to fully understand the roles and obligations of all actors involved in the mentoring process and the goal-oriented process focused on the potential of the mentees.

In many cases, the social mentors became persons of high importance to the mentees, giving them advice and comfort in times of need, such as the divorce process, coping with fears arising at the workplace, and installing new communication styles at work.

The consciousness of their own roles and responsibilities enabled fruitful cooperation and interdependence in their work.

4.4 Risks and barriers for the mentoring and the job adaptation

The life circumstances of the mentees play a role in finding and retaining a job. Complex family dynamics, lack of proper documentation attesting to the disability, and ineffective institutions pose challenges to the mentoring process.

The social mentors while leading an individually tailored mentoring process with the mentees can rarely isolate themselves from the wider environment and life circumstances of the mentees. The lack of flexibility of institutions to provide the necessary documentation for PwD, and the lack of a constructive family environment were barriers to maintaining the envisaged dynamic of the mentoring process.

Looking back at the process, the mentors are critical in that better preparation of the working environment, especially in the communication with PwD could have catalysed a better job adaptation process. The working environment was not that ready to accept a new style of communication to include the views of a person with hearing impairment or for the other person with intellectual disability to enable a lot of trial and error on the pathway to best enlisting his work tasks and responsibilities. Installing new work habits is a long-term process and PwD requires comprehensive assessment and skills investment in this respect.

4.5 Long-term effects of the mentoring and work engagement

Social mentors accentuate that through their contact the mentees have improved their self-image, and have shifted their positive thinking in regard to their future. Mentees show greater self-confidence, self-assurance and self-dependence.

In general, all mentees have the prospect of retaining their jobs. The social mentors have established good communication with the professional mentors and the working environments are properly set to facilitate the reception and adaptation of the mentees. This is critical in addressing stereotypes pervasive among employers that people of vulnerable groups may not fit into the workplace. The social mentors showed that with proper support and an enabling system, adaptation is most likely to happen.

It is important to note that for the mentees involved in the piloting, the work opportunity created via the mentoring was their first work experience.

4.6 Possibilities for change

Social mentors would have appreciated:

- Better coordination with public institutions in getting assessment and conformation on the disability;
- Better alignment with the institutional assessment of PwD and striving for a more complementary approach between the life skills assessed by the institutions and how they can be utilised in the employment process;
- More trust in public measures for labour activation;
- Openness and collaboration with external stakeholders;
- More allocated time for mentoring and support in job carving of persons coming from vulnerable backgrounds.

4.7 Personal learning for social (inclusion) mentors

All social mentors accentuate that the whole learning and real-time practice experience was a game changer for them, personally and professionally.

They note the following personal takeout from the process:

- Sometimes people just need encouragement and support, and they will do the rest themselves;
- I learned that when the mentee lacks adequate support from the environment, no matter how confident and decisive he/she seems, it will end in hesitation for everything, in himself/herself, in the social mentor, in work, even in their desires and attitudes;
- I learned that for PwD it is crucial to include a person (from family, friends, close environment) who would be a support in the process. Sometimes it can be the person who at that moment has more authority or is able to assess certain risks better ahead of time. But the mentor should also assess how much s/he can work with that third person, in terms of character, excessive protectiveness, control, etc;
- I learned that parents are a key figure for PwD and that when we as mentors match with potential mentees, we must assess the potential to have a good match with the parents or someone who is their supportive environment;
- Each vulnerable group and each person have different needs and a different mentoring approach is needed. A good assessment of the mentored person is needed in order to be able to give the right directions and take the right steps related to changing habits or accepting certain new situations, as well as during their employment.

5 DISCUSSION AND WAYS FORWARD

It is evident that social mentoring and job carving when applied in coherence, generally enable better employment opportunities for the mentees. Their characteristics of a strong focus on the mentees, utilising a holistic approach to assessment of their interests, strengths and needs, work adaptation processes that align the potential worker and his/her capacities with the requirements of the job, and facilitation of ongoing communication between employers and mentees creates a positive eco-system for labour market integration of people coming from vulnerable groups.

Social mentors develop empathic relationships with the mentees and their expertise, experience and understanding to address the barriers and issues faced by the mentees, allowing individuals from vulnerable backgrounds to see their untapped potential for employment and personal growth. On the other side, job carvers enable transformation of the structure of tasks at the workplace so that the process and the employer benefit from the potentials of the workers and address the limitations in safe and supportive organisational environment.

In general, the following can be summed as lessons from the piloting phase:

Lesson 1: Job carving is not a radical change to the working process but requires radical openness from employers to experiment with adaptation and new designs of the workplaces and the job tasks;

Lesson 2: Social mentoring gives job carving excellent insight into the capacities, potentials and limitations of the individual. The 'job carver' gives the social mentor excellent insight into the business and how the working process can be adapted, adjust to match the individual;

Lesson 3: Internal organisational support to the 'job carver' is necessary so that carving can be executed and businesses need guidance in capacitating intra-preneurs and leading internal organisational change;

Lesson 4: Job carving is a time consuming and difficult to fit in a six months' timeframe, in particular for persons with complex needs;

Lesson 5: Job carving is a creative process, not 'natural' to all businesses and job places but with the right support can be executed in all economic sphere and working processes;

Lesson 6: Different vulnerable groups require different type, length and intensity of support, thus, efficient preparation for the professionals to lead this process is crucial;

Lesson 7: Cooperation framework with public institutions is necessary so that social mentors and job carvers can utilise to best the capacities of the system for assessment and referral;

Lesson 8: Active labour market measures are important stimulus for businesses and in many cases, provide the first hands-on work experience for persons with vulnerable background;

Lesson 9: The social mentor can act as job carver if knowledgeable to navigate the 'zoom in and zoom out' processes from/to mentees and employers;

Lesson 10: Parents of mentees should be consulted and constructively involved in the mentoring process. Yet, the aim of their involvement is to support independence and integrity of the mentee.

Job carving can be a valuable tool in work integration mentoring (social mentoring) processes for hard-to-employ people and in systems where an inefficient workforce is determined.

JOB CARVING - new employments through social mentoring

In social mentoring, the job-carving approach can play a significant role in creating a sustainable workplace, which implies that the person has tasks according to the capacities and interests, and adaptation/carving makes the new worker more efficient and more satisfied in the workplace. Here, the social mentor leads the process, and the focus is on the mentee, considering the work environment, the processes, and the employer's needs. Their task is



to recognise the most suitable position for the mentee in the existing context and recognise the possible challenges on which they will focus through the process of social mentoring in the workplace.

JOB CARVING – in systems (working organizations) where there is inefficiency in some of the workplaces

Job carving can also be applied in existing systems where it is determined that the working processes and delegations of tasks are inefficient. It can bring significant results in protective companies employing PwD and other entities where a workforce has potential but also limitations that need to be addressed in the workplace. Job carving enables, through the analysis of the system, processes and relations in the system, for employees with less efficiency to determine a position with tasks in which these employers will maximize their potential. A redesigned workplace according to the employee's capabilities and the needs of the employer will positively impact their well-being, the efficiency of the work process, and the work atmosphere.

Based on this data, the project team will adapt the social mentoring capacity program and the job carving as supportive tools in the implementation strategy (to better meet the needs of beneficiaries and employers).