
STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS TO BOLOGNA PROCESS AND EMPLOYABILITY (CASE STUDY OF BULGARIA)

Tamari Poladashvili, PhD student

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Master Degree of Business Sciences

*Invited Lecturer at Faculty of Economics and Business, Batumi Shota
Rustaveli State University, Georgia*

Abstract: The problem of youth unemployment is a global issue. This article discusses in depth the youth unemployment problem. It analyses the characteristics, causes, and consequences of graduate unemployment and examines its relationship to the Bologna Process. A qualitative research has been done with focus group discussions of Bachelor and Master Degree students. The study explores the nature of the labour market for higher education graduates and the main obstacles that youth face on their journey from education to employment. The study aims to determine whether graduate unemployment is a result of shortage of jobs, skills, or lack of coordination. It includes recommendations for involving the government, the managing bodies of higher education institutions as well as employers and career service offices in order to overcome youth unemployment.

Key words: Bologna Process, higher education institutions, graduate employability, youth labour market.

JEL: A22, A23, I23, I28, J24.

Introduction

Employability is one of the most researched topics in microeconomic studies. The concept has been discussed widely, taking into consideration the fact that it has many practical implications. However, there is very little information regarding youth employability as a consequence of the Bologna Process. Even though youth unemployment has become a challenge for most European and non-European countries after almost 20 years of

Bologna Process. Therefore, our approach is to reevaluate this ongoing process in higher educational institutions from students' perspective in terms of youth employment. This paper presents a comparative analysis of the formal agreements disseminated through official communiques and the actual processes.

The main objective of the paper is to present the student's perspective towards the Bologna Process and the educational process in higher education institutions with regard to: advantages and disadvantages, problems, issues, and perspectives in terms of with graduate employment.

1. Literature Review

Relationship links between the Bologna Process and unemployment

The Bologna Declaration was signed on June 19, 1999 by the Ministers of Education of 29 European countries (Ministerial Conference, 1999). The Ministers' meeting was preceded by a discussion involving a large number of representatives of the academic community, ministries and international governmental and non-governmental organizations. The Bologna Declaration was based on the Sorbonne Declaration, which was signed in May 1998 by the Ministers of Education of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom (Ministerial Conference, 1998). The Bologna Declaration is the most important statement regarding the Pan-European higher education policy and reforms. Later on, it became part of a process (which is referred as Bologna Process) driven by the participating countries but also involving the European Commission as a key partner in the follow up process. Other international educational and related organizations participate in the Bologna Process as well. All the signatory states of the Bologna Declaration belong to both the Council of Europe and to the UNESCO European region. According to the Declaration, the major goals of the Bologna Process should be reached by the end of the first decade of the new millennium.

The links between employment and education have been researched in numerous and multifaceted articles. Education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors for development, hence, it had been proved that countries cannot achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. Education enriches people's understanding about themselves and the world. As a human development tool it improves the quality of people's lives and leads to broad social benefits for individuals and the society. Education raises people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances.

According to Vuksanovic (at all, 2015) employability highly depends on the national and institutional contexts. Thus, discussions on (un)employment rates are strongly correlated to education, which has become one of the indicators for the quality of the education provided by higher education institutions. Higher education prepares students not only for employment, but also for their lives as active citizens in democratic societies, as well as for their personal development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

However, education and employability should be considered together as strongly related processes. Although the labour market must not steer higher education in any way, cooperation with stakeholders should provide sufficient information flows among employers, higher education institutions, students, teachers, and the general public in order to improve graduates' employment opportunities and continuous education. In recent years European students are rather in support of a curriculum reform, as it became essential to combine education with quality work placements, traineeships or internships through the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships. Some higher education institutions have already seen the importance of seeking employment and stakeholder consultation alongside adequate graduate degrees (Vuksanovic at all, 2015).

Regarding higher education, we have to point out that in recent years it has been facing more challenges than ever before. Major changes have been done in the last century and higher education has been transformed from an exclusive service rendered only to a small number of wealthier people to a service available to all. Today anyone can take a student loan or apply for a scholarship to cover the tuition fee. Furthermore, the process of expansion of higher education has become unstoppable and today the student enrolling universities are no longer only from the age group of 18 to 21. This triggered some structural changes in educational process. (Ramsden, 2008). Throughout the history of humankind, education, and especially higher education, was defined as the appropriate environment for knowledge transfer, research and development activities expansion, and for creating the adequate social structure for people's progress as social beings. (Orindaru, 2015).

In response to the new challenges to the educational system, the European ministers of higher education initiated a modernization of its structure, schemes and rules. Employability was one of the key aspirations of the Sorbonne Declaration. It marked a new era of the European higher education, as a means for promoting people's mobility and employability. According to the Sorbonne Declaration, employability is considered as one of the positive effects from the establishment of comparable degrees across the European Education Area (1998). Employability was subsequently a key issue in the Bolo-

gna Process and was discussed in several communiqués (Conference of Ministers Responsible for Education 2001, 2007, 2009, 2012, 2015).

The principle approaches of Bologna Process is to create a coherent and fruitful European Higher Education Area based of the following objectives:

- to implement a easily readable and comparable degree system;
- to adopt an educational system of two main cycles (undergraduate/graduate);
- to establish a credit transfer system (ECTS);
- to promote mobility by ensuring legal recognition and removing administrative obstacles;
- to promote European co-operation in a quality-assurance structure;
- to promote the European dimension in higher education.

After the adoption of the Bologna Declaration, European Ministers of Education met every two years to further discussion and build up the initial objectives of the first declaration. During the Bologna Process they emphasized the importance of student employability and their competitiveness on the labour market, (direct quotes are marked in quotation marks)

“To promote European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher Education System” – (Ministerial Conference, 1999);

The ministers expressed gratitude for developing of study programs that meet the importance of academic quality in terms of long lasting employment and called for the permanent active role in Higher Educational Institutions – (Prague Communique, 2001);

“The necessity of ensuring a substantial period of study abroad [...] so that students may achieve their full potential for European identity, citizenship and employability” – (Berlin Communique, 2003);

“Universities should ensure the development of doctoral programs in advancement of interdisciplinary trainings and transferable skills that facilitate the broader employment market requirement.” (Bergen Communique, 2005);

During the meeting in London (London Communique, 2007), Ministers defined employment as one of the important goals of the Bologna Process: “Developing our rich and varied European cultural heritage, we create an EHEA based on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equal opportunities and democratic principles. This approaches will facilitate mobility, increase employability and strengthen Europe’s attractiveness and competitiveness”;

After defining employability as the most important challenge for higher education institutions, the ministers asked the BFUG (Bologna Follow-Up

Group Secretariat) to “consider in more detail how to improve employability in relation to each of these cycles as well as in the context of lifelong learning” (London Communique, 2007);

The Follow-Up Group defined employability as “the ability to gain initial meaningful employment, or to become self-employed. To maintain employment, and to be able to move around within the labour market” (Employability, 2007-2009). According to that report, the Follow-up Group promotes good practices in the following areas:

- Importance of involving employers and stakeholders in creating educational curriculum;
- Opening careers services;
- Employment in the public service and career structures that are fully compatible with the new degree system;
- Innovation of curriculums based on research outcomes;
- Increasing the awareness of employers with the value of Bachelor’s qualification and associated learning outcomes;
- Recognition of higher educational degrees in the labour market across Europe.

On the next meeting of Bologna process, ministers outlined that employability empowers students individually to fully seize the opportunities in dynamic labour markets.

“We aim at raising initial qualifications as well as maintaining and renewing a skilled workforce through close cooperation between governments, higher education institutions, social partners and students“(Leuven Communique, 2009).

The report also emphasize that due to the demand from labour market, higher education institutions should provide students with the specialized knowledge and professional competences they will need throughout their lives.

At Bucharest Communique (2012) Ministers discussed three main goals: to provide high-quality education for all, to enhance graduates’ employability during and after their studies and to increase mobility among the countries and higher educational institutions. At the same time Ministers committed to enhance the employability and personal and professional development of graduates throughout their careers.

In May 2015 the ministers defined employability as one out of four priorities until the period of 2018 (Yerevan Communique, 2015). Supporting graduates employability throughout their working lives in rapidly changing labour market is essential; Fast changing technological features, high demand of new job profiles and increasing opportunities for employment and self-employment – is considered to be the major goal of EHEA. The process

should ensure that at the end of each academic cycle graduates have acquired the competences required by the labour market, which will enable them to develop new competences they may need for their employability throughout their working career (Yerevan Communiqué, 2015).

Within the Bologna Process the qualification framework was the major developing tool that could improve the graduate employability. The establishment of a set of comparable frameworks all around the Europe can provide employers with detailed information about the higher education. Public administrations and higher education institutions should increase the awareness of the importance of the frameworks and their potential use. According to Garra (2013) in the long run, the newly developed Bologna transparency tools can be used for ensuring all learning outcomes students attain during their studies, hence, it can be recognized for employment purposes.

National qualifications frameworks facilitate the development of vocational education, training and other forms of tertiary education and vice-versa which creates a smoother simplification between both sectors. At the same time, most European students agree that further implementation and development of student learning outcomes, as well as assessment methods and criteria needs to be updated. The process can be vital for the enhancement of student and graduate employability.

The Bologna Process outcomes in Bulgaria

Bulgaria was among the first 29 countries that signed the Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education on June 19, 1999 (EHEA, 1999). Based on Declaration, the foreseen activities will have a considerable effect on the higher education system in each country. Bulgaria continues to carry out the Bologna process and ultimate goal of create tertiary education with most recent European standards. Bulgarian higher education modernization process consists of two stages: integration in the European Higher Education Area (the Bologna process) and integration in the European Research Area. According to EURYDICE (2016) the core objective of Bulgarian higher education system is to invest and grow new specialists with high qualifications into their determined fields and to develop research, science and culture. Currently in Bulgaria there are 51 tertiary educational schools under the Higher Education Act. There are state owned and private schools, including universities, specialized higher schools and self-contained colleges. There are 37 public (25 universities, 11 specialized higher schools and 1 self-contained college) and 14 private higher schools (5 universities, 2 specialized higher schools and 7 self-contained colleges).

Academic year of schooling is divided into two semesters and usually consists of 32 academic weeks. (Efficient Education Management Network for LLL in the Black Sea Basin, 2014).

It is also notable that Bulgaria made a prominent progress since London Communiqué 2007. The main development parts are:

✓ **Mobility** – increased mobility capabilities of Bulgaria's higher education institutions, including participation in the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013) and academic exchanges with European and non-European foreign higher education institutions;

✓ **Social dimension** – support students at all levels of learning, including PhD candidates;

✓ **Data collection** – creating an information database under the guidance of Ministry of Education and Science with the aim to provide an overview about the current and suspended students divided into educational degrees; Beside that, the registry of academic staff was established in higher education institutions as well as the registry of the legalized higher education quality obtained abroad and the registration of higher education diplomas issued by the higher education institutions of Bulgaria;

✓ **Employability** – improving of knowledge validation and other skills obtained in formal and non-formal way in context of increasing the employability;

During the improvement process of Bulgarian Higher Educational system, one important decision has been accepted by the **European** Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency of Bulgaria become a full member of above mentioned group.

Bologna Process in Bulgaria is under the direct monitoring and assisting of the Ministry of Education and Science. It takes all responsibilities for implementation of new standards and guidelines in the country. The National Representation of Student Councils and, most importantly, the Rectors' Council play an important role in the achievement of the Bologna Process goals. In the country, higher education programs are measured with ECTS credits. The compliance of Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) of higher education entered into force in the 2004 / 2005 academic year.

Regarding the development of educational curriculums at Higher Educational Institutions, 180 credits are required for the acquisition of a Professional Bachelor degree, with the minimum 3 years of study. The aim of this educational degree is to provide students with fundamental theoretical frameworks, ICT skills and competencies, practical experience, and accessibility to a minimum 2-year Master's course in a same professional field as they graduated. For acquisition of a Bachelor's degree students are required to obtain 240

credits within the study period of 4 years. In order to obtain a Master's degree, students have to acquire minimum of 300 credits during 5 years of study. If the Professional Bachelor's degree has already been obtained, students are required to achieve 120 credits for the completion of a Master's degree. In case of Bachelor's degree students need not less than 60 credits for obtaining a Master's degree. Master's degree is characterized as profiled training and profiled knowledge with research orientation tools.

According to the Bologna Process Bachelor's degree is considered as first cycle, Masters' Degree as second cycle and Doctoral studies as third cycle of the process. Doctoral degrees requires 3 or 4 years studying at least. The study plan usually is created by individually in order to defend a dissertation thesis at the end of the studies. Work has been done on the establishment of joint doctoral programs in order to improve the quality of the doctoral degrees. For improvement of Doctoral studies Higher Educational Institutions are usually promoted by Ministry of Education and Science to carry out some work in order to establish partnership with other Educational Institutions for creating joint or sandwich doctoral degrees. In context of Doctoral Studies, we wanted to discuss information about their employability and competitiveness on the labour market, however we could not find any common system for tracking the career development of the doctoral graduates.

Youth Unemployment Statistical trends in Bulgaria

Considering the fact that Higher Education System in Bulgaria follows up the trend of European Standards, youth unemployment remains the major problem in the country. We have to note that there are significant fluctuations in how statistical rates are calculated. According to Bratoeva-Manoleva (2008) the unemployment trend for the most of the countries is at least twice more than the national average.

According to National Statistical Institute - Republic of Bulgaria in 2017 economically active population aged 15 - 64 represent 71.3% out of the all population with the same age group, corresponding - 3 277.5 thousand person. The activity rate for 15 - 64 years were increased compared to 2016 and went up by 2.6%.

The total of number of employed persons were 3 150.3 thousand which represents 51.9% of population with the age of 15 and over. The employment rate for the same age group corresponds to 66.9% respectively 70.6% for men and 63.1% for women. The employment rate for the age group 20 - 64 years were 71.3%, which is 3.6% higher than same number at 2016. The employment rate for 20-64 years increased by 4.0% for men and by 3.3% for women, achieving respectively 75.3% and 67.3%.

The employment rate for 55 - 64 aged people was 58.2%. In comparison with 2016 it increased with 3.7%; 4.2% corresponds for men and 3.3% for women. In total, there were 206.9 thousand unemployed persons, 114.2 thousand men and 92.8 thousand women respectively. The number of unemployed persons has declined by 16.3% since 2016. The unemployment rate decreased by 1.4% in comparison with 2016 and equal to 6.2%. At the same period the unemployment rate decreased by 1.7% for men and by 1.1% for women, corresponding 6.4% and 5.9% respectively.

The unemployment rate for the age group 15 - 24 years was 12.9%, and for the age group 15 - 29 years - 9.9%. Compared to 2016 the unemployment rates for these age groups declined by 4.3 percentage points and by 2.3 percentage points.

For 2017, long-term unemployed persons was accumulated 113.8 thousand, representing 55.0% of all unemployed. The long-term unemployment rate was 3.4% corresponding 3.6% for men and 3.2% for women.

There were 1 317.7 thousand economically inactive persons aged 15 - 64, of whom 569.8 thousand corresponds men and 747.9 thousand women. The inactivity rate for the aged group of 15 - 64 years, was 28.7% (24.6% for men and 32.9% for women). The number of discouraged persons aged 15 - 64 was 112.2 thousand.

Early leavers from education and training of population aged 18 - 24 shared 12.7%. For the population aged 30 - 34, having completed tertiary education was 32.8%.

Table 1
Labour Market indicators in regards of Youth segment
in Bulgaria 2016-2017

(National Statistical Institute-Republic of Bulgaria, (2018))

Activity	2016 (thousands)	2017 (thousands)	Change (2017 minus 2016) %
Employed persons aged 15- 24 in thousands	133.4	148.6	15.2
Employed persons aged 15-29 in thousands	440.3	464.5	24.2
Employment Rate (aged 15-24)	19.8	22.9	3.1
Employment Rate (aged 15-29)	38.3	42.0	3.7
Unemployed persons aged 15-24 – in thousands	27.7	22.1	-5.6
Unemployed persons aged 15-29 – in thousands	61.4	51.0	-10.4

According to National Statistics Institute of Bulgaria (2018) and EURES (2018), despite all the positive trends in the development of the labour market in Bulgaria, there are also challenges. Some of the challenges in 2017 include: the large share of long-term unemployed (55.3% of the employed population); the gap between demand and supply in the labour market in terms of skills, sectors and regions, the limited supply of quality education and social disparities.

2. Research Methodology

Our research objective is qualitative by nature. We conduct in depth interviews through focus group discussions. The focus group methodology was chosen, because it is best described as a guided group discussion on a specific topic (Dürrenberger et al., 1997). As Krueger (1994) suggests the discussion were repeated in several different groups for the better understanding of trends and patterns of qualitative study. The aim of the focus group study is to explore and dig deeper into peoples' values and beliefs rather than to generalize findings; it is to explore public opinion, not to reveal surface choices. The focus group has open-ended nature which makes it well suited to exploring in depth public opinion. It provides insights into how people think and helps to go in to deep to understand phenomena of problem (Kroll et al. 2007). Group interaction between members of encourage participants to make connections to various concepts through the discussions that may not occur during individual interviews (Nagle, 2015). The main argument for involving this methodology to our research is that in this context it has a collective nature. This suit students and graduates, they cannot articulate their thoughts easily, cannot change and interpret answers after discussion.

In order to understand student's perspective towards the Bologna Process, advantages and disadvantages, problems, issues and perspectives correlated with unemployment. We conduct qualitative research at Dimitar A. Tsenov Academy of Economics.

Two difference focus groups have been chosen according to research objectives:

Focus Group - № 1:

Number of Respondents: 8-10

Age of Respondents: 20-24

Gender of Respondents: 50/50 F/M

Mandatory Condition: Bachelor Degree graduates; Must not include individuals subordinated to each other;

Method for Interview Recording: audio

Duration of Interview: 1.30 hr (without break)

Focus Group - № 2:

Number of Respondents: 8-10

Age of Respondents: 25-29

Gender of Respondents: 50/50 F/M

Mandatory Condition: Master Degree graduates; Must not include individuals subordinated to each other;

Method for Interview Recording: audio

Duration of Interview: 1.30 hr (without break)

3. Discussion

The education to employment path can be described as a road with three main pillars of intersections: enrolling in Higher Education Institution, building the right skills and finding a suitable job corresponding to professional career. The problem is that it is full of roadblocks at each of these three stages. The focus group questionnaire were build up according to those obstacles.

Very first questions of interview were based on Word Association techniques. Through to these technique participants were asked to indicate their “top-of-the-mind” feelings, thoughts or opinions. We asked “*What associations comes when you hear the words “Higher Education”?*”

Respondents’ associated Higher Education with the words like “*well-educated person*”; “*successful individual*”; “*good career and job satisfaction*” and etc.

For the follow up question we have used mind mapping techniques, which generates the ideas and makes clear the relationship of between actual plan and goal. Participants were asked to “*Complete the sentence: The person who gets the higher education is...*”

Respondents generated the ideas: “*smarter in some way and able to get a better job (not all the time)*”; “*they have a brighter future*”; “*they are having higher position in social life*”; “*they get higher salary then others*”.

Participants of focus group were from different major fields: Faculty of management and Marketing; Faculty of Industry and Commerce; Faculty of Economic Accounting and Faculty of Finance. The majority of graduated students were from the Department of Tourism Economics and Management and Department of International Economic Relations. Based on their filed of study, the alumni mentioned that during the studying process their improved communication skills, team working and leadership attitudes, “*thinking out of*

box” *“being better in brainstorming and problem solving”* one girl also share that she had speech anxious problem, but projects and presentations helped her to overcome shyness and this time she enjoys speaking in front of auditorium.

Respondents were asked if employers are satisfied with all this skills mentioned above to hiring graduates. Their answers were totally positive, however, when we get in the end of the interview and we asked again *“What do you think, what are the main obstacles for graduates in terms of unemployment?”* respondents commented:

“Companies are looking for experienced workers, with young age and good practical commands”

“New graduated students don’t have enough experience, maybe they can work in service sector, but if they are looking for middle level manager position or higher, it’s very hard to find a place”

“Well, the main problem is that there are not enough work places and that is because there are too many people studying economics and not focusing on other fields”

We also asked: *Do you think is a diploma a signal for employers to hiring you?* Students commented that:

“Yes, it is a signal but employers these day are searching not only for people with diplomas but people with more skills”

So based on graduates’ answers, we came back with the initial questions that the skills students are getting at higher education institutions are no longer enough for labour market. Essentially, it is the supply and demand mismatch, which can be interpreted as a poor match between the skills and job position required to fill vacant location. This arguments already questions the curriculums and other learning materials which students are learning during the 3-4 years at university. We asked graduates *“Was there anything you wanted to study in your professional field but higher education institution could not fulfil your wish?”* Most of the answers were negative or not related with specific courses.

“There were something like languages I wanted to study but it is nothing in common with economics”

“I don’t remember anything like this”

However, on the other question *“What do you think, does learning materials/books/curriculums need to be updated?”* Respondents commented that:

“Yes I do think it needs to be updated even changed in some way”

“I believe it need to be updated because we are studying the same things for more than a hundred years now”

“We have luck of some new books”

“Some of the books we are studying are 15 or more years old”

In another words, curriculum must be dynamic and constantly modified in order to graduate students who are at the "cutting-edge" of knowledge and technology. Many changes are now occurring which will stimulate new directions in curriculum in higher education the curriculum should undergo constant evaluation throughout its creation and implementation. Students have the attitude that they are studying all necessary information and materials, however, they also complain that materials are old styled and doesn't answer modern needs. In this case Formal reviews are a safety net to ensure attention is focused on the curriculum to ensure its fidelity and accuracy.

For the end of the interview, we asked students how they see settlement of the issue: *"What do you think, what has to be done and by whom in order to decrease the number of unemployed graduates?"*

Alumnus have commented:

"I think that the government should provide the graduated students internship right after graduation, and I think this will give them advantage and they will know what to do in a company when they truly get hired"

"We are living in the millennium of technological revolution, so Government could create some platforms for start up business with special conditions for students in order to stimulate employability"

"I personally think that we need more practical knowledge during the studding process" "Universities have to encourage students to go out, have some free time to have part time job, we cannot study everything here"

"Students also have to increase awareness and work about themselves, like I need to improve myself with the major things that particular companies need and demand"

Student perspective toward to problem solving were diverse, as it was supposed to be due to the complex subject. The issue is rather multifaceted and all stakeholders of Higher Education Institution have to be involved in the development process.

As an assumption, we can draw two different perspective of Bachelor graduate students and Master graduate students.

Bachelor graduate students have basic competences to acquire knowledge and understand the field of study based on general knowledge and aspects. They have ability to collect and interpret relevant data in order to make judgments which include reflection on relevant issues of social, scientific or ethical nature. However, according to their perspective, these skills are not enough for professional work position. Therefore, they are suggested to

work in different place rather to their professional career, most often its service sector, sales groups or etc. The main challenge Bachelor graduates face is the misleading the career path.

Master graduates have the capability of problem solving in new environments in the context of related field of study. They understand knowledge which provides the ground opportunity to be innovative in the development of new applications, mostly in research-based context. Graduates are able to integrate knowledge and deal with the complexity of formulating judgments. When it comes to the employment, graduates might be suggested from private sector to work according to their professional career, however, on the lowest level of career path. Taking account the job position they are low-paid workers that is considered as a main problem of Master graduate students. While students don't expect an easy going pass to a job after graduation from university, however, students had the perception that preparing for a specific job or career was the most important reason for going to university. However, job satisfaction in terms of salary is very low. As a certainty, student's expectations are not always rooted in reality and they seems disappointed.

4. Recommendations

According to our results, we think that cause of the problem should be discussed by Policy Makers, Authorities of the Higher Educational Institutions as well as the stakeholders from Private Sector.

Recommendations for Higher Educational Institutions:

- We strongly recommend to increase the hours of practical learning process during the studding of theoretical frameworks while planning a curricula. Training system for graduates, including curricula, need to be designed with close cooperation between employers, educational institutions and training provides. There must be strengthen links with industry stakeholders to be more involved in evaluation of present activities, creating curriculum scheme and for further improvement structuring innovative plans;

- Universities and specially faculties of Economics and Business and/or other related fields should promote entrepreneurship. Europe's economic growth and jobs depends on its ability to support the growth of enterprises. Entrepreneurship creates new companies, opens new markets and it is widely considered as the most important source of employment. In this re-

gard, educational institutions should encourage students to become entrepreneurs, give all the practical knowledge for set up and grow small/medium size companies. Bulgaria can benefit with both ways, taking possibilities from European Commission financing SMEs, on the other hand employ graduates in their professional fields.

- Based on our observation, its not common practice in Bulgaria to have “Career service” at university level. Having a special work unit leads a community of professionals focused on the employment of the graduates by providing access to relevant knowledge, resources, insight and relationships. Nowadays, more and more employer and alumni are looking for career development solutions which are based on objective evaluation. Therefore, we recommend to implement this internationally excepted practice.

There has often been a complex relationship between higher education institutions and employers, particularly in the private sector. Employers often voice concerns over the quality of graduates from universities and other educational institutions. On the other hand, higher education insinuations feel that business in not fully appreciative of that qualities and skill those graduate students possess. It’s rather hard to make a common agreement, but there are some recommendations we draw attention:

- Youth unemployment can be reduced if private sector will link further with tertiary education institutions for the development of curriculum. Its one of the essential part of Bologna Process and it’s highly recommended by quality assurance centres. Moreover, business should provide part-time teachers to lecture on subject such as engineering, economics, finance and etc.

- Private sector can and should strengthen the orientation of the courses taught and research carried out in the institutions of tertiary education to make them more relevant for particular regional needs.

- Business sector should finance some exceptional start-up ideas. Growth is generated by highly ambitious graduate entrepreneurs who find and realize promising business opportunities. Their companies grow quickly and so increase the employment rate. On the other hand, business sector gets some interest rate from it, which makes the process mutually beneficial.

Policy makers has the essential role in this process. There are few details we want to draw attention:

- The Ministry of Education and Science and higher education institutions should continue their support for the European dimension of academic

collaboration by providing support for cooperation between institutions, mobility of students, joint teaching programs and practical training.

– At the same time, and in order to fully benefit from international academic cooperation, universities and higher education institutions should strengthen foreign language training; align academic qualifications and specializations with those in the European area; improve employability; further promote programs of student and teacher staff exchange with national and foreign universities and expand access to the system of mobility grants.

– Government should encourage cooperation with the business sector and establish advisory councils involving governments, higher education institutions and the business sector. There is too little focus on private sector employment and entrepreneurial education. We think, there should be a wish for supporting and encouraging national companies and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to create medium and high salary jobs for graduates and other skilled people.

– Last but not least important, based on our observation there are different statistical information in National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria and other international statistical web-pages like Eurostat. Therefore, we think that National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, Statistical Offices in Ministries of Higher Education should create a comprehensive educational and labour market information system which will provide a reliable statistical data for objective understanding.

Conclusion

According to the research we can conclude that employability in the millennium of Bologna process is about making graduates more likely to gain employment in their chosen field(s) meaning that, they should have the ability for facilitating new businesses start-ups and/or filed competences for achievements success in their working place.

As a result, Higher education graduates have a qualification with knowledge of the theories and methods of their disciplines, the ability to apply their knowledge on the job in order to assess and solve problems. However, there is a lack of applied skills. Based of qualitative study, we strongly recommend to increase the share of practical experience while studding the theoretical frameworks by means of career development centres at the university

level, which could provide students with all updated vacancies and successful career building strategies. As far as, it's no longer enough to match educational and labour markets, all stakeholders of tertiary education should rearrange teaching methods, trainings and everyday routines for students. It must be mentioned that mutual cooperation between higher education shareholders is crucial. They should contribute with participating in discussions about the design and delivery of higher education programs, internships and other types of activities, which will enhance youth employment.

Youth employability cannot be fixed in a one-time effort, there is constant need for enhancement and adaptation of social needs.

On the other hand, higher education institutions provide employability rather than employment. The difference between employability, the ability to learn and ability to gain employment, the actual acquisition of a job, should always be kept in mind in decision-making processes. Higher education should rather be tailored according to the needs of the society as a whole and recognize and keep in mind the complexity and diversity of educational programs, disciplines and professions when discussing enhancement of employability of graduates.

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Editorial address:

2, Emanuil Chakarov street, Svishtov 5250
Prof. Andrey Zahariev, PhD – editor-in-chief
☎ (+359) 889 882 298
Deyana Vesselinova – Technical Secretary
☎ (+359) 631 66 309, e-mail: nsarhiv@uni-svishtov.bg
Albena Aleksandrova – computer graphic design
☎ (+359) 882 552 516, e-mail: a.aleksandrova@uni-svishtov.bg
Blagovesta Borisova – computer graphic design
☎ (+359) 882 552 516, e-mail: b.borisova@uni-svishtov.bg
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