

CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE: THE CASE OF KOSOVO



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ABSTRACT

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The goal of every young person not only in Kosovo but also beyond remains to find a job that would be safe and liked by them. The young years for all young people are rightly considered as one of the most important challenges, as each of these age groups is at the "crossroads" of a weighty decision for his / her future. This time consists of starting/completing the educational process and finding a job. If the young person completes the education cycle and is employed according to the qualification he has completed then this would have a positive impact not only on him but also on society in general. Many young people have difficulty finding a job after finishing school and some of them cannot do it at all or are forced to be a part of the "gray economy". This type of employment has a negative impact not only on workers but also on increasing informality in the country.

Contribution/ Originality: The topic that is going to be addressed in this paper is basically the current situation of employment for young people in the labor market. Its purpose is to stimulate and sensitize all decision-makers of this field to think over the situation and contribute to easier access to the labor market, achieving a higher employment rate, reducing the unemployment rate and providing conducive working environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Investment in education, especially in higher education, contributes to the reduction of unemployment, which is still high in Kosovo. Employment growth in the context of globalization can only be achieved through lifelong education and training. However, Kosovo, even in this area, lags behind in terms of the EU average working population participating in the program outside the regular education system. In recent years, the transition of young people from education to work has become increasingly complex and turbulent (Schoon & Silberstein, 2009). The latest report from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2020) shows that 37% of unemployed youth waits for 2 years or more. Long-term unemployment at an early age of the youth can impact permanent negative consequences on their future such as lower ability to achieve career goals, income decline, strained family relations, lost self-respect, lower health status, and risk of social exclusion.

The main reason for this situation is inadequate education system and the training of staff that do not respond to the labor market as well as the lack of sufficient employment programs. "Rising unemployment remains a major challenge in development efforts. It is not just an economic issue, but a serious social issue" (Jakimovski, 2013). Approaching the labor market and wages are essential in determining the assets of individuals and families, and are also important in providing security and control over those assets (Alcock, 2006). Thus, the position of young

people in the labor market is the main determinant of their wealth or poverty, so research shows that the status of young people, in this case, differs significantly from that of employed individuals. Wages from paid work are the largest source of income, while lack of income is the leading cause of poverty (Sutherland, Sefton, & Piachaud, 2003). Changes in employment status or income are the leading cause of movement in or out of poverty (Jenkins & Rigg, 2001). The number of employees in a family is the most important indicator of the poverty rate of all family members, including children, but lifelong employment affects the post-retirement poverty rate. The challenges that young people has faced after the year 2000, are more complex and different compared to their predecessors. Coles speaks of a prolonged and broken transition in which the economic independence of young people from their parents lasts longer (Coles, 1995). Insufficient stakeholders' initiatives have resulted in poor performance in youth employment.

1.1. Hypothesis

- Young people have disadvantage in the labor market.
- The transition to adult independence continued from the mid-twenties to the mid-thirties.
- Long-term unemployment compels them to postpone important commitments for both the individuals and the society.

2. METHODOLOGY

The basic methodology applied in this research consists of the knowledge obtained through the analysis of the study conducted, and from previous statistical data and other research. Field survey on "Youth trends in Kosovo" was done in November 2021 to collect data. It was conducted through direct contact with several young people observing pandemic conditions and measures. The research sample includes 450 respondents-/adults-28). Our data was supplemented by various secondary sources from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics: employment and unemployment rate by gender and education in 2020.

Unequal opportunities to access necessary resources such as employment and education not only stimulate young people's dissatisfaction towards the existing social conditions but also increase their awareness of the importance of equal opportunities for success in education and employment. The average total risk associated with unemployment in Kosovo is still significant and unevenly distributed. Of course, most of the reasons for high unemployment are related to the economic situation in society, the characteristics of the unemployed persons – demographic, social, or economic, and the changing demand for skilled and unskilled labor.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many research outcomes point out the risk and negative consequences resulting from long-term unemployment and the risk of homelessness. (Craine, 1997; Johnston, Mac Donald, Mason, Ridley, & Webster, 2000; Jones, 1997; Webster et al., 2004; Williamson, 1997). Earlier, the transition from youth to adulthood would occur early in a professional career. "Now the youth labor market is very unpredictable, so the switch from the parent's home to an independent life is very precarious" (Giddens, 2007).

Long-term unemployment makes young people irritated and dissatisfied, because they are forced to postpone their important decisions of their future for indefinite period of time, pertaining to both individuals and society – such as marriage, births, etc. "On the one hand, the long waiting period for employment shifts the age limit for marriage, while on the other hand, in the established marital communities, it gives rise to disruption in family functions" (Jakimovski, 2000). Involvement in the labor market through marginal, low-wage, precarious work under poor working conditions does not represent a dignified social inclusion (Atkinson, 1998; Gallie & Paugam, 2002).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Labor Market Uncertainty

Unemployment represents the percentage of the unemployed individuals out of the total capacity of the labor force in a given territory within a country. This economic indicator shows the level of the unused labor force in economic processes in a geographical territory. Unemployment is one of the most serious macroeconomic diseases. Rising unemployment is often seen as a sign of the economic recession phase. According to the European Union classification, unemployed are those members of the labor force who did not have a job during the week when the study was conducted, actively sought work during that week, and are ready to start a job in the next two weeks. Some of the young people who have been contacted, consider the biggest problem to have limited job opportunities as well as low income which are not enough for a solid and dignified life even if they find a job. Of course, one of the other problems that young people face is the education issue which does not provide them with a practical basis to feel confident when choosing a job.

Young people, even if they have graduated from college, face difficulty to find work in the profession corresponding to their academic qualification, so they work everywhere for very little money. This situation discourages the young people and makes them demotivated and depressed; resultantly, they seek salvation abroad for better opportunities. For most of the people living in Kosovo society, wages are their main source of income. Thus, access to the labor market and the wages they receive are essential not only in determining the assets of individuals and families but also very important in securing and controlling these assets. The position of young people in the labor market is the main determinant of their wealth or poverty, and the survey shows that in this case the position of unemployed young people differs significantly from those who are employed.

Table 1. Rate and structure of unemployed youth (age 16-28 years) in Kosovo.

The unemployment rate of young people (16-28 years old)	30.2 %
Participation of unemployed young people in the total number of unemployed individuals	46.9 %
Participation of inactive youth in the total number of able-bodied young people (16-28 years old)	60.0 %
Participation of unemployed youth (16-28 years old) with a waiting period of 1 year and more in the total number of unemployed (16-28 years old)	56.6%
Participation of unemployed youth (16-28) with higher and university education in the total number of unemployed youth with higher education	20.7 %
Participation of unemployed young people (16-28) with secondary education in the total number of unemployed young people with secondary education	37.7 %

Table 1 shows that Kosovo, with an unemployment rate of 25% (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2020) certainly does not offer good prospects for social integration of young people, especially if we take into account their unemployment rate that is 28.6%. The high percentage of unemployed people with higher education (60%), shows how much the state loses from unused investments in the new workforce for professional qualifications. Majority of the young educated generation loses the prime time of their potential and capabilities waiting for employment to serve their society and do their best. A large part of the younger generation lives with the support of the family, that is, the solidarity of parents and close relatives.

4.2. Young people's Expectations for Employment

Employment, after completing education, is the goal of every adult and its achievement is related not only to economic reward and building an independent life but also to succeed in achieving a range of self-potential or self-actualization. An individual's insecurity about the future course of his / her career can take many forms. One form of uncertainty is the fear of failing to keep the current job, while the other that is of interest to us in this paper is the possibility of getting a job after finishing education.

Our question to consider the thought of success in finding work after graduation was: What is your opinion on employment after graduation?

Expected answers are grouped into four categories (finding a job is difficult, finding a job is both easy and difficult, finding a job is easy and the result is that one cannot make an assessment). The participation of the respondents for categories is presented in the table below.

Table 2. Employment after education.

No.	Answers	%
1	Finding a job is difficult	66.6
2	Finding a job is neither easy nor hard	20.4
3	Finding a job is easy	2.0
4	Cannot make an estimate	11.0
5	Total	100.0

Source: Survey 2021.

From the results of **Table 2**, it can be concluded that the young people surveyed are pessimistic about finding the desired job, because two-third stated that finding work is difficult after completing education. The share of those who believe that finding a job is easy after completing education, as seen in the graph, is symbolic (2.0%). Of course, the age and level of education of young people influence the answers to this question. The statement is above average that finding employment is difficult for young people aged 25 to 28 and for those who have completed secondary education (69.1%; 71.2%).

Table 3. Share of youth perception for easy or difficult employment.

No.	Answers	%
1	Good position in my profession	15.5
2	Personal effort	18.8
3	The less reputable position of my profession and high unemployment	37.1
4	Personal shortcomings	4.4
5	Positive changes in Kosovo	24.2
6	Total	100.0

Source: Survey 2021.

Table 3 shows that the majority of surveyed young people who find it difficult to get a job believe that this is due to the less reputable position of their profession and high unemployment - such an attitude is present approximately among one-third of the surveyed population (37.1%). Their absence is considered a reason for their failure among 4.4% of respondents. On the other hand, those who think that they can be easily employed, look forward to their future in the positive changes that occur in Kosovo (24.2%), then consider that their effort (18.8%) will help them find work and 15.5% of respondents attributed the success in future employment to the good position of their profession. In Kosovo, there is an unfavorable social context that includes: Poor assessment of knowledge in society, diploma does not guarantee a good life at least in the country, mass enrollment in faculties, and insufficient encouragement from society.

To the question: "What is important today to have success in life?" the answers are given below in **Table 4**.

Table 4. The most important thing to succeed in life according to the age of the respondents.

According to age	19-28	30-39	40-49	50-65	>65	Average
To have skills and personal education	26.4	24.6	19.6	19.3	12.6	20.6
To be honest and moral	10.6	13.9	12.7	22.5	32.7	18.4
To have money	24.2	23.6	31.9	24.4	17.6	24.3
Participation or connection with the government	38.8	37.9	35.8	33.8	37.1	36.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey 2021.

As seen in Table 4 we can conclude that young people (19-28 years old) in Kosovo see success in their lives through their participation or connection with the government, as (38.8%) believe that success in life depends on connection or affiliation with the government. After that, (26.4%) are those who believe that their ability and education can help them in life, while (10.6%) believe that they should be honest and moral, and (24.2%) of this category think that one must have money to be successful in life.

4.3. Where young people prefer to work

To the question: "Where would you like to work?" the general distribution of responses suggests that young people want to work mostly in state administration / public enterprises and abroad. Table 5 shows the results of (29%) of young people who want to work in state administration / public enterprises; (22.6%) abroad; (20.2%) in their business; (11.6%) in foreign enterprises in the country; (7.2%) in international organizations; (3.4%) in local private enterprises with another owner and (6%) are unspecified.

Table 5. Where do you want to work?

No.	Answers	%
1	In-state administration / public enterprises	29.0
2	Abroad	22.6
3	In their businesses	20.2
4	Foreign companies in the country	11.6
5	In international organizations	7.2
6	In private companies in the country with another owner	3.4
7	Unspecified	6.0
8	Total	100.0

Source: Survey 2021.

Certain differences in general distribution responses regarding attitudes where young people want to work are seen in terms of gender. Men prefer to work in foreign companies in the country (15.2%), in their business (19.1%), and work abroad (23.1%). Women prefer to work in state administration / public enterprises (30.8%) and international organizations (10.2%). When analyzing these responses by age of young people, it is observed that those who want to work in state administration / public enterprises, fall in the age group between 25 and 28 years (32.0%), or between 20 and 24 (30.9%). Young people surveyed between the ages of 16 and 19 (25.7%) want to work abroad, particularly, and the least interested in working abroad are the young people between the age of 25 and 28 (18.4%). The age group of 16 to 19 years (19.8%) is more interested in having their own business.

The distribution of these answers, according to educational status, again offers interesting conclusions. The most interested in employment in state administration / public enterprises are young people with higher university education and college education (40.4%), and fewer young people with primary education, which is understandable. Young people with secondary education (35.1%) and primary education (33.3%) mostly choose jobs abroad, while respondents with primary education (14.3%) choose more for work in local private companies.

Table 6. "Would you accept a job that differs from your vocational education?" we have received the following answers.

No.	Answers	%
1	Yes	31.7
2	Yes, if I don't get employed according to my profession and qualification	47.8
3	I would not accept	10.9
4	Unspecified	9.6
5	Total	100.0

Source: Survey 2021.

4.4. Accepting a Job other than the Qualification

The measures taken for the solution of the problems faced by the unemployed youngsters may vary in terms of goals, duration, providers, and stakeholders. Citizens are willing to accept a significant number of measures to improve unemployment in a variety of ways. Each category of the population, based on their experience and conviction, can assess what is most appropriate when measures are implemented to reduce unemployment.

The obtained results in Table 6, reveal the number (10.9%) of those who would not accept a job that differs from their professional education is quite small. On the other hand, one-third of the respondents (31.7%) think that a job that differs from their vocational education should be accepted. We can conclude that this approach is a definite solution, and such a structure of unemployed responses has been an additional solution to reducing unemployment for a long time. Therefore, we can argue that this approach requires certain behaviors, that is, to accept a job that does not correspond to vocational education, to reduce unemployment. Cross-referencing respondents' responses with their socio-demographic characteristics show some deviations in terms of age, education, and region. In terms of age, responses from respondents aged 25 to 28 are seen above average (36.7%) to accept a job that differs from their vocational education. On the other hand, among respondents aged 16 to 19, there was a sub-average statement (27.1%) for accepting a job that differs from their vocational education. Otherwise, the intersection of the answers with the education of the respondents shows a selective influence. The direction of influence moves towards reduced admission - high admission from high to low level of education. This regularity is expressed in the preference of the "Yes" modality, which is preferred by (51.8%) with completed primary education, (54.7%) with completed secondary education, (26.2%) with university and college education.

4.5 The Impact of Unemployment on Moving the Age Limit for Marriage and Childbirth

Survey data presented the following overview of the overall distribution of responses provided by respondents. Based on Table 7 results, it can be seen that (63.3%) of the respondents answered that they agree (partially agree - (29.4%) and fully agree - (33.9%), that youth unemployment pushes the age limit for marriage and birth, and only - (14.4%) answered that they do not see any impact (they do not fully agree - (6.2%) and partially disagree - (8.2%). The level of education of the respondents also shows a significant correlation that is, there is a straight-line correlation between an increased level of education and consent that unemployment influences the decision to marry and have children.

Table 7. Impact of unemployment on marriage and birth.

No.	Answers	%
1	I completely disagree	6.2
2	I partly disagree	8.2
3	I neither agree nor disagree / I do not know	22.3
4	I partially agree	29.4
5	I completely agree	33.9
6	Total	100.0

Source: Survey 2021.

Table 8. Loss of the best years in life waiting for employment.

No.	Answers	%
1	I completely disagree	2.4
2	I partly disagree	7.1
3	I agree and disagree / I do not know	14.2
4	I partially agree	32.6
5	I completely agree	43.7
6	Total	100.0

Source: Survey 2021.

4.6. The Impact of Unemployment on Career

In principle, (76.3%) of respondents answered positively (43.7% fully agreed and (32.6%) partially agreed), and (9.5%) answered that the younger generation, waiting for employment, does not suffer any impact on the loss of the best years in life. The analysis of the responses according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in Table 8 shows that they have some influence on their attitudes. Namely, young people with mainly completed secondary education (80.5%) share the opinion that the educated generation loses the best years of life, waiting for employment.

4.7. Why Young People Want to Leave

The question was: "Evaluate the reasons why young people want to go abroad (1- most important and 4 - less important)". According to the order of all the answers, Table 9 shows how the meaning of the reasons is determined throughout the sample. Appropriate professional working conditions and good earnings from the point of view of young people are the most important factors of motivation to move abroad. Besides, attaining the highest standard of living is also a temptation and finally the least motivating factor is getting to know a new culture.

Table 9. Reasons why young people want to go abroad (1 - most important, 4 - least important).

1 = most important 4 = least important					
Reason	1	2	3	4	Total %
Good professional working conditions and good profits	46.0	32.3	15.6	6.1	100.0
Good conditions for development and professional advancement	19.8	29.7	42.6	7.9	100.0
The best standard of living	37.5	27.6	25.4	9.5	100.0
Getting to know a new culture	2.8	6.9	11.7	78.6	100.0

Source: Survey 2021.

From the next question, we wanted to find out how young people can be facilitated for transition, namely which resources facilitate the transition from education to work. Regarding how to facilitate the transition from education to work, we asked the following question: What can make the transition from education to work easier? (rank 1 - most important to 3 - least important).

Table 10. What can make the transition easier from education to work?

1 = most important 3 = least important				
Ability to move from education to work	1	2	3	Total %
It is necessary to connect educational institutions with the needs of the economy	28.1	35.4	36.5	100.0
It is necessary to clearly define the professions, knowledge, and skills needed for the rapid development of Kosovo	29.1	35.3	35.6	100.0
Education and work combined through work practice	44.2	26.4	29.4	100.0

Source: Survey 2021.

It is clear from Table 10, the opportunities for the transition from education to work are not so important. The general distribution of answers shows that the most common answer for the transition from education to work is combined education and work through work practice, and less important is the connection of educational institutions with the needs of the economy and a clear definition of professions, knowledge, and skills needed for the rapid development of Kosovo.

Due to the incompatibility of information on the status of jobs and qualifications of the unemployed, time and effort are needed to approximate the supply of the unemployed and the demand of potential employers (Devine & Kiefer, 1990; Ioannides & Datcher Loury, 2004; Mortensen, 1970).

5. CONCLUSION

Unemployment is not present equally across all layers. It mostly affects the unskilled labor force and the young population. The overall conclusion that emerges from the survey is that young people consider employment after graduation to be very difficult (66.6%).

The most common reasons for hard employment are poor occupation and a high unemployment rate. Uncertainty due to lack of work has negative consequences on the lives of individuals.

Job insecurity is also linked to the delay of important functions that are pivotal both for individuals and society - marriage and family formation. In this regard, (63.3%) of respondents stated that unemployment shifts the age limit for getting married and giving birth. The difficult employment of young people means problems at the individual level and costs to society.

While the most significant individual problems can be declared: frustrations and anxieties, postponing marriage and starting a family, consequences in the lifetime perspective, unused knowledge and skills, low earnings in professional life, and social exclusion.

Due to the long waiting period for employment and the inability of young people to get married and have children, society's problems and costs include negative success in demographic policy, low contribution, and lack of energy utilization and creative skills of the new workforce and potential movement abroad from new and professional staff.

This research, as well as the previous researches in this field, confirm that young people would accept a job that differs from their professional qualifications (31.7%) and (47.8%) decide to "Yes" if they cannot be employed according to professional qualifications.

Most of the young people want to work in state administration / public enterprises (29%) and abroad (22.6%). Conducive working environment and attractive salary package are the key factors to move abroad. According to the survey, the easiest way to switch from education to work is combined education and work through practice and professional training for specific groups and segments focusing more on career development and job search skills.

It is suggested that reforms in the education system must be harmonized with the needs of the labor market in Kosovo and the European Union. The construction of relevant modalities and parameters for measuring the quality of results of educational institutions should be considered a key element in the overall reform of the education system in the country. We can also rightly conclude that offering an attractive environment for investment should be the first and foremost priority at this time to reduce the high unemployment rate and create employment prospects for the new generations entering the market work. The government should establish the development strategy, the relevant employment policy and assess to what extent the existing economic policies are in line with this primary goal.

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