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Cooperation of Companies with Educational Institutions for Contemporary Education in Kosovo

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Abstract

Educational institutions focus is mainly on the demands of the labor market, where the planning of various strategies from further studies can be implemented in their field. There is a big challenge to prepare new generation to competitive labor market. As we see also in all over the world, it is very important to have qualified workers who are able to adapt to the needs of companies. In Kosovo is very challenging to find qualified workers, this is a fact well known by companies. Companies in Kosovo are not satisfied with qualification of potential employees. Companies are constaintly complaining about problems they face to find or to hire qualified workers. The main purpose of this paper is to strengthen the cooperation of educational institutions with companies. This can be achieved by studying such collaborations across different countries, which can be a guide for adaptation in our country.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data, which was then distributed to large corporations with the greatest number of employees. Secondary data is used for reviewing scientific literature and specific studies which are state of the art in this field.

The results of this research do not show a satisfactory level in terms of cooperation of companies with educational institutions, as most do not practice this form of cooperation, even if it is for mutual benefit.

Keywords: educational institutions, labor market, companies, cooperation.

1. Introduction

High unemployment rate (25.7 %), in particularly for women (34 %) continues to be the major challenge for the country's economy (KAS, 2021). The highest unemployment rate among women might be due to maternity leave, which is significantly expressed more in the private sector.

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Companies in the first six months of pregnancy have to pay 70 % of the basic salary (Labor Law No. 03/L212, 2010), and this is considered to be financial burdensome for private companies and most probably one of the reasons that causes high unemployment rate among women.

Although there is evidence about high unemployment rate compared to countries in the region, private companies in Kosovo continue to express their difficulties in finding labour force with appropriate qualifications in demand of their various work processes (ACCK, 2018). One of the primary conditions for high productivity and the most adequate development of education system in Kosovo is adapting supply to labor market demands (ACCK, 2018).

According to Isgoren et al. (2009) more appropriate resources should be provided to strengthen education, while student education should be adjusted according to the needs of the industry. Whereas Ptak (2014) foresees cooperation between businesses and educational institutions as one of the most important actions in to tackle the discrepancy between the supply and demand for qualified labour force.

Any country that wants to improve its educational situation necessarily has to spend more on education. According to AMK (2018), during 2018 from the report of the European Commission for Kosovo, only 4.7 % of GDP was spent on education. The main interventions in the field of education have been grouped in three categories (MEST, 2016):

Programs that support improving the quality of education;

- Programs that support the effective interconnection of education with the labor market;
- Programs targeting marginalized groups.

Economic success depends significantly on the creation of information and knowledge transfer freely available to individuals and organizations, establishing in the so called "knowledge-based economy". European universities have enormous potential; there are over 4000 institutions, with over 17 million students, and approximately 1.5 million workers, 435000 of whom are researchers (Zavargo, Šumić, 2011). For this reason, very good cooperation is needed between educational institutions and businesses, because the university plays an important role in educating people and has an impact on the development of the region through interaction with industry (Zavargo, Šumić, 2011).

Companies could participate in collaborative relationships with universities and research organizations in order to obtain access to basic information, better use of their current competencies across a wide variety of functional management areas, including finance and marketing (Veugelers, Cassiman, 2005).

Knowledge is developed with the objective of contributing to and helping the development of populations, boosting their competitiveness and increasing their worth. Despite the importance of knowledge and information transfer in businesses, few studies have been carried out within the framework of the cooperative connection between universities and companies. The establishment of universities surely promotes competitiveness and stimulates entrepreneurial activity. There is limited information on the impacts of entrepreneurial activity and cooperation between companies and universities. Therefore the main aim of our study is to fill this vacuum in research by investigating factors that may impact cooperation between companies and educational institutions, such as entrepreneur characteristics and urban location.

2. Literature review

Cooperation between companies and educational institutions plays a very important role in the economic development of a country. Universities are important actors in the innovation system (Pereira, Franco, 2021). Pavlin (2016) shows that cooperation between educational institutions and universities can take numerous forms, and among them are science and technology parks, entrepreneurship, research carried out jointly by students and companies, lecturers, and researchers, as well as research centers.

Zojda (2007), through his article presents an overview of vocational education and technical training in general in Australia and around the world. According to his study, the necessary knowledge gaps and skills should be identified and training that affects job opportunities in the labor market (Zojda, 2007). According to Dragusha and Prenaj (2021), new generation used social networks to interact with companies and get involved to work. This could be new way for companies to approach graduated students and cooperate with educational institutions.

Cooperation between vocational education and the labor market can be improved by identifying the most favorable means of cooperation, such as: educational, socio-economic, technological, practical, and innovative (Terentyeva et al., 2018). This cooperation will affect the promotion of vocational education programs, the engagement of students and their development, the application of research and production projects, as well as the development of professional competencies (Terentyeva et al., 2018).

Employability is a major challenge for initial vocational education, therefore education policy measures need to be complemented by policies aimed at increasing regional job mobility (Malirantaet al., 2010). The established criteria can make a greater contribution to the integration of education programs as well as to the interconnection of educational and professional standards (Terentyeva et al., 2018).

The authors Teixeira, Veiga and Fernandes (2019), through a sample of 500 Portuguese companies, analyzed the cooperation between educational institutions and companies. According to Teixeira et al., (2019), cooperation is more preferable when entrepreneurs are younger, and have better financial performance.

Whereas Ptak (2014) in his study shows that for many years, businesses and universities have collaborated in a variety of ways, and both benefited from each other. Such collaboration gives higher education institutions the possibility of increasing their scientific and didactic capacities. The repercussions of this well-acknowledged collaboration provide companies with the possibility to obtain competitive advantage and boost the proportion of knowledge in the generation of corporate value (Ptak, 2014).

A study conducted by Aristei, Vecchi and Venturini (2015) evaluated the invisible factors that affect the forms of collaboration using data from seven EU countries during the period 2007–2009. The results of this study show that internal knowledge, eligibility conditions, and external explanations represent a major difference in the intensity of research and development of cooperation of European companies with educational institutions (Aristei et al., 2015).

Higher education institutions are places where innovation is required, and society implements their information (Dalyan, 2004). His study aimed to solve the problems and disabilities of higher education in Turkey, while the creation of the project "Acquiring Enterprising Skills Project" was intended to be implemented first in one region and then throughout the country (Dalyan, 2004). Many questions addressed to entrepreneurship in Turkey are mainly studied by academicians who are not entrepreneurs. The premise is that students would have a better grasp of the conditions for success and lessen the sensation of dread associated with the business world by being schooled in a genuine business setting (Dalyan, 2004).

According to Mavlanova (2021), the essence and practical application of the group approach to education form the necessary conditions for the development of the education system, as well as the search for new opportunities to improve the quality of education. Cooperation between them will create a more suitable environment, providing training of qualified specialists with more favorable conditions (Mavlanova, 2021). There is a need for active labor market programs, prequalification vocational training programs (Elezaj et al., 2019).

University and company cooperation permits the study and verification of the creative transfer of information (Aristei et al., 2015). The relevance of information transfer and of cooperation between companies and institutions is of huge value due to their valuable contribution to global development and competitiveness (Fernandes, Ferreira, 2013). The competitive advantages offered by information from electronic recruitment should be used as much as possible, not only for recruitment but also for advancing the recruitment strategy, which is one of the most important challenges for companies (Dragusha, Ukaj, 2021). The current situation in the labor market shows us that after a pandemic Covid 19 a new era of technological changes is coming and companies should have to adapt to these changes quickly. Companies that are directly involved in the labor market selection process have to adapt to changes by using electronic recruitment.

Despite the importance of management and information transfer in companies, few research has been carried out within the scope of the cooperative connection between universities and companies (Rodríguez-Gómez, Gairín, 2013).

3. Methodology

The primary data used in this study was provided from a large private companies operating

in Kosovo market. Secondary data is used from scientific literature and specific studies in this field. The questionnaire, structured into four sections, was sent to the managers of the companies who are directly involved in decision-making process regarding collaboration with educational institutions. Data analysis was done by data processing with programs like Excel, statistical programs SPSS 20.0 and Stat Soft STATISTICA 10.0 software version for statistical analysis.

The reliability test for LIKERT scale variables was performed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The mathematical expression of the Alpha coefficient is represented as in the following equation:

$$\alpha = \frac{K}{K-1}\left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{K} \sigma_i^2}{\sigma^2}\right)$$

Where, K stands for the number of questions or variables,
σ^2_{is} shows the variance of the answer to the question *of*,
σ^2 is the variance for the answers to the general questions.

Pearson chi-squared test was used for testing relationship between two categorical variables to determine the associative relations. The values of this test range from 0 to 1 and try to correct the chi-square (x) proportionally to N. This test is commonly used for 2x2 tables with nominal data. That's why, according to Hair et al. (2003) Chi-square test can also be applied to ordinary data. The formula for calculating the chi-squared test is as follows:

$$x^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

Where, x^2 = Chi-square
O_i = observed value
E_i = expected value

4. Results

Majority (76.1 %) of interviewed managers was male, while relatively smaller percentage (23.9 %) was female. This indicates that in the private sector in Kosovo, men dominate in manager positions. Concerning the level of education, majority (52.2 %) have completed basic/bachelor studies, 45.7 % had a master's degree, while only 2.2 % had secondary education.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for managers of companies

Variables	Unit	Min	Mean	SD	Max
Manager age	year	23.00	34.60	9.11	58.00
Work experience	year	1.00	11.58	8.68	35.00
Work experience in the current company	year	1.00	8.32	7.25	28.00
Attending trainings within the year	in number	1.00	2.62	1.54	8.00

Note: SD-Standard Deviation
Source: Own.

With regard to the research question: How many trainings in the field of finance did the managers attended within a year? The results of the study show that only 13 % of the managers attended trainings in finance regularly, 23.9 % attended training frequently, 17.4 % of them have rarely attended trainings, 32.6 % of them have ever attended trainings, while 13 % have never attended trainings in the field of finance. Life-long financial education/training is relevant as it provides people with useful tools to make decisions that improve their economic well-being (Larracilla-Salazar et al., 2019). From the results, we can see that the attendance of trainings by managers is very low, compared to the dynamics of market development. It is therefore suggested to create a more effective communication channel between universities and companies on how to access new programs (Pereira, Franco, 2021).

Table 2. General information for large companies

Variable	Unit	Minimum	Mean	SD	Maximum
Establishment of the company	year	4.00	19.58	9.31	42.00
Number of employees – 2017	People	32.00	182.02	201.41	1,000.00
Number of employees – 2016	People	20.00	150.93	123.19	650.00
Number of employees – 2015	People	15.00	133.04	122.00	650.00
Number of employees – 2014	People	15.00	123.41	118.23	650.00
Number of employees – 2013	People	15.00	106.33	81.68	350.00

Note: SD-Standard Deviation

Source: Own.

From the general information, we can see a trend of increasing the number of employees in the company. From 2013 to 2014, the number of employees engaged in the company increased by 16.06 %, while from 2014 to 2015 there was a slight increase of only 7.8 %. The positive trend has been from 2015 to 2016 by 13.44 %, while a more pronounced increase in employees engaged in large companies was from 2016 to 2017 by 20.59 %.

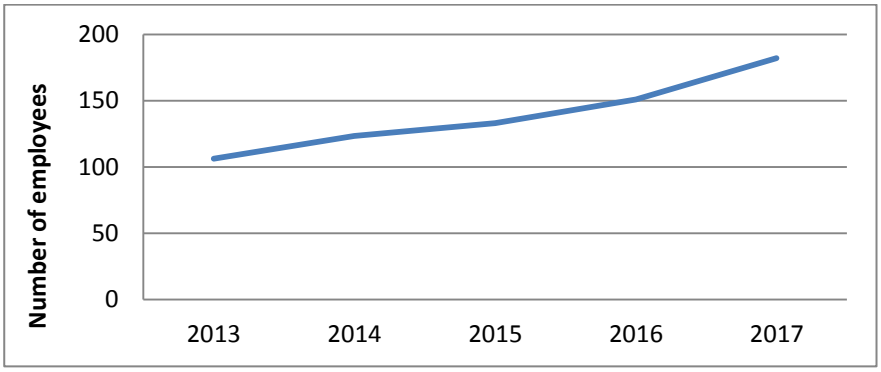

Fig. 2. Average of employees engaged in the company (2013–2017)

In the following table, we can see the number of large companies categorized by sectors of economic activity.

Table 3. Companies by sectors of economic activity

Sectors of economic activities	Number of companies	Number of Companies %	Number of observations
Trade	31	56	124
Production	11	20	44
Health	1	2	4
Service	5	9	20
Construction	6	11	24
Information and Communication	1	2	4
Total	55	100	220

Source: Own.

The large companies included in this research belong to sectors such as: trade, manufacturing, health, service, construction, as well as information and communication. From the data presented in the Table 3, we can see that the trade sector dominates with 56 % of companies, while the combination of activities has only 9 companies.

The total number of variables measured on the LIKERT scale was 5 such as: none, little, neutral, partial and many). The result of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (0.758) of the responses of the respondents received confirmed a high degree of reliability.

Table 4. Reliability statistics for LIKERT scale variables

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardization elements	Number of elements
0.758	0.757	21

Source: Own.

The results of the total statistics showed that if an item is removed from the database, the Alpha Cronbach coefficient will decrease for all LIKERT scale variables included in the reliability analysis, with the exception of the regional situation in the financial position, the global situation in the financial position, and the financial analysis of the company.

Table 5. Total element statistics for LIKERT scale variables

	Average rate if element is removed	The degree of variance if the element is removed	Corrected element-Total correlation	Correlation i manifold	Cronbach's Alpha if element removed
Increasing the number of employees	68.5366	84,705	0.270	0.761	0.752
Expansion of activity	68.2927	83,162	0.355	0.813	0.746
Adding products	68.3171	81,822	0.414	0.797	0.741
Increase investment	68.7073	82,262	0.302	0.684	0.750
Increasing marketing costs	68.4146	81,649	0.333	0.565	0.748
Regional situation in financial position	68.4878	89,806	0.014	0.605	0.770
Global situation in financial position	68.8780	87,460	0.124	0.721	0.762
Bank loans	68.4634	78,605	0.430	0.894	0.739
Bank overdraft	68.7561	79,889	0.376	0.883	0.744
Credit card overdraft	69.1707	80,745	0.379	0.825	0.744
Subsidized bank grants or loans	69.6829	76,022	0.596	0.718	0.724
Trade loans	69.0732	82,270	0.353	0.722	0.746
Other loans	69.5854	80,999	0.434	0.819	0.740
Leases	69.7073	84,062	0.315	0.540	0.749
Financial analysis of the company	67.0976	90,740	0.057	0.653	0.760
SWOT analysis	67.6098	84,144	0.371	0.712	0.745
Company environment analysis	67.7561	85,939	0.335	0.741	0.749
Recognition and analysis of workers	67.4146	88,499	0.177	0.755	0.756
Customer knowledge and analysis	67.1707	89,345	0.161	0.561	0.757
Recognition and analysis of competitors	67.1463	88,478	0.243	0.717	0.754
Audit of the company	67.3415	82,880	0.430	0.634	0.742

Source: Own.

The results of Table 5 show that if the regional situation in the financial position is removed from the data for the LIKERT scale variables, the reliability scores will increase from 0.758 to 0.770

(Alpha Cronbach if the regional situation in the financial position is removed 0.770 – Cronbach's Alpha coefficient 0.758 = 0.012). The Alpha Cronbach coefficient will decrease if the global situation in the financial position is removed from the reliability analysis, e.g. (Alpha Cronbach coefficient if the global position in the financial position is deleted 0.762 – Alpha Cronbach coefficient 0.758 = 0.004). Whereas, for the last element, which was the financial analysis of the company, the Alpha Cronbach coefficient will decrease by 0.002 (0.758 – 0.706 = 0.002).

In Table 6 is presented Distribution of frequency of cooperation between companies and educational institutions.

Table 6. Distribution of frequency of cooperation between companies and educational institutions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	25	54.3	55.6	55.6
	Yes	20	43.5	44.4	100.0
	Total	45	97.8	100.0	

Source: Own.

In Table 7 is presented descriptive statistics on Forms of cooperation between companies and educational institutions.

Table 7. Forms of cooperation between companies and educational institution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		27	58.7	58.7	58.7
	1	2	4.3	4.3	63.0
	1, 2, 3	1	2.2	2.2	65.2
	2, 3	2	4.3	4.3	69.6
	2,3	1	2.2	2.2	71.7
	3	11	23.9	23.9	95.7
	3/4.Financial	1	2.2	2.2	97.8
	Practices, donation	1	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Note: The codes that describes what codes in table means
(1) Research projects with cooperation between companies and educational institutions,
(2) Training for students,
(3) Practices for students
(4) Others.

Source: Own.

In Table 8 was presented crosstab of gender of respondents for cooperation with educational institutions. In Table 9 we used chi-square tests to see association between gender of respondents for cooperation with educational institutions.

Table 8. Crosstabulation of gender of respondents for cooperation with educational institutions

Crosstab

Count

		Gender		
		1.00	2.00	Total
Cooperation with educational institutions	No	5	20	25
	Yes	6	14	20
Total		11	34	45

Source: Own.

Table 9. Chi-Square Tests of gender of respondents for cooperation with educational institutions

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.602[a]	1	.438		
Continuity Correction[b]	.182	1	.670		
Likelihood Ratio	.599	1	.439		
Fisher's Exact Test				.500	.333
Linear-by-Linear Association	.588	1	.443		
N of Valid Cases	45				

a. 1 cells (25.0 %) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.89.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: Own.

Based on the analysis of Table 9, we conclude that there is a association between the above mentioned variables presented in the table are positive significant association between two variables of cooperation with educational institutions.

In Table 10 was presented crosstab of qualification of respondents for cooperation with educational institutions and in Table 11 we used chi-square tests to see association between qualification of respondents for cooperation with educational institutions.

Table 10. Crosstabulation of qualification of respondents for cooperation with educational institutions

Crosstab

Count

		Qualification			
		1.00	2.00	3.00	Total
Cooperation with educational institutions	1.00	1	12	12	25
	2.00	0	11	9	20
Total		1	23	21	45

Source: Own.

Table 11. Chi-Square Tests of qualification of respondents for cooperation with educational institutions

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.928[a]	2	.629
Likelihood Ratio	1.303	2	.521
Linear-by-Linear Association	.004	1	.951
N of Valid Cases	45		

a. 2 cells (33.3 %) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .44

Source: Own.

Based on the analysis of Table 11, we conclude that there is an association between the above mentioned variables presented in the table are positive significant association between variables of qualification and cooperation with educational institutions.

In Table 12 was presented crosstab of job positions of respondents for cooperation with educational institutions. In Table 13 we used chi-square tests to see association between job position and cooperation with educational institutions of respondents.

Table 12. Crosstabulation of job positions of respondents for cooperation with educational institutions

Crosstab

Count

		Job Position					
		.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	Total
Cooperation with educational institutions	1.00	1	5	17	1	1	25
	2.00	1	6	9	1	3	20
Total		2	11	26	2	4	45

Source: Own.

Table 13. Chi-Square Tests of job positions of respondents for cooperation with educational institutions

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.034[a]	4	.552
Likelihood Ratio	3.083	4	.544
Linear-by-Linear Association	.162	1	.687
N of Valid Cases	45		

a. 7 cells (70.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .89.

Source: Own.

Based on the analysis of Table 13, we conclude that there is a association between the above mentioned variables presented in the table are positive significant between job position and cooperation with educational institutions.

5. Research Limitations

The pandemic COVID-19 was challenging during the research. It also has an impact on the research and has extended the research time. As a first step, contacts were established with companies via e-mail and social networks. Then, in the second phase, we conducted direct interviews, sometimes using different communication platforms, to make the research more reliable. There is a lack of previous research on this subject to make a comparative approach in Kosovo. But beside these difficulties respondent responses made realizable to reach research results on the cooperation of companies with educational institutions for contemporary education in Kosovo.

6. Conclusion and suggestions

An important factor for companies is their cooperation with other businesses at the local, regional, and international level. The findings of the study show that 95.7 % of companies cooperate with local businesses, while 4.3 % of them lack this cooperation. Regarding the question of whether they have cooperation with regional businesses, 88.9 % of them answered positively, while only 11.1 % they do not enjoy this cooperation. The results show that there is no lack of cooperation of companies with international businesses, since 80 % of them stated such a thing. The results show that there positive significance between gender, qualification and job position of respondents to cooperation with educational institutions.

The companies also cooperate with educational institutions through training, various research projects, internships for students, and employment opportunities. However, the results of this research do not show a satisfactory level, because 6.5 % admitted that there is cooperation with these institutions, while the remaining 93.5 % do not enjoy this type of cooperation, although it is important for both parties. The low level of cooperation between universities and industry companies 4.0 is also observed in modern Russia (Fonina, et al., 2019). The main difficulty

regarding relationships between companies and universities is the lack of knowledge about undergraduate programs that can support them (Pereira, Franco, 2021).

According to Ptak (2014), it should be highlighted that there is still a tiny number of companies that deal with the educational community, possibly owing to the quite difficult norms of collaboration. Among the difficulties of collaboration between businesses and the education sector, one should mention: educational programs not exactly complying with the demands of the company, cumbersome norms of cooperation, or contradictory expectations with respect to establishing partnership.

University and business cooperation in the field of science and innovations is not well-functioning, according to researchers (Baskakova et al., 2016). Some of them are related to regulatory areas and demand participation of government institutions. Other parts of them are related to information and communication fields and can be removed by further development of forms for universities and businesses.

In terms of training, 10.9 % of large companies in Kosovo provide training for students, while the vast majority of 89.1 % do not offer such a thing. However, the most appropriate form of cooperation between companies and students, with about 37 %, is the application of internships for students, although not satisfactory. Although universities have established numerous cooperation agreements with companies operating in Kosovo. However, more than half of them, or approximately 63 %, have not yet begun this type of collaboration with educational institutions. But this form of cooperation is expected to attract other companies, which is in the interest of both companies and educational institutions. The same case is presented by the authors Fonina et al. (2019) in their work, where numerous agreements on cooperation between regional companies and universities exist but which do not provide an increase in employment indicators of recent graduates.

Further research should be conducted in the public sector as well, so that the two sectors can be compared in terms of collaboration between private and public organizations with educational institutions.

Technological developments have changed a way of interaction between companies and educational institutions. During the lockdown we saw that it was possible to work online. New technological tools or systems could be used to improve cooperation between companies and educational institutions.

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