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**PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION ON THE
LABOR MARKET IN BULGARIA**

Abstract: *The report examines the level of Bulgarian education and the knowledge, skills and competences that students acquire after finishing university. Below are listed the problems and perspectives facing Bulgarian educational system and business opinion on the matter.*

Key words: *education, labor market, business, knowledge, skills, competences*

Introduction. The global financial and economic crisis has a strong negative impact on the Bulgarian economy. The country has high unemployment rates. But among the graduates, there are other reasons for unemployment, stemming from the current educational system in Bulgaria. The majority of graduated students are unable to work in their specialty and leave the country (nearly 50% between the ages of 20 and 40 years old). The structure of the Bulgarian educational system is not adequate to the needs of the labor market. This is caused by two reasons: the surplus of staff in some specialties and the lack in others.

Actuality of the problem. There is a gap between the needs of the economy and the students which are preparing in higher education. This tendency has deepened with the years. The gap puts majority of young graduates in a difficult situation on the labor market.

Bulgarian government has no relation to what personnel and tangible resource is needed for quality education, how many and what specialists are needed in different sectors, what admission of students must be determined at universities to be associated with the needs of the country. Ministry of Education, which sets the policies to the sectors of knowledge and ways of their implementation, does it without any visible for society analysis on specific issues and sectors.

There is a big difference between the needs of business and the mass of specialties that are on the agenda of the Ministry of Education. This mismatch leads to surpluses and deficits in specific specialties.

The surplus and the deficit of specialists depend not only on supply but also on demand. They are changing dynamically and they are not in the power of the educational institutions. The numbers of the majors are granted by Ministry of Education.

Some scholars determine surpluses and deficits as a defect of the Bulgarian educational system.

Defect of our educational system is that the bulk of people who graduates are in sciences which are not necessary at the moment on the labor market - law and economics.

There are "mega majors" that seem to flood the country with graduates with no field for realization. Professional fields are 52, but only 6 of them cover more than half of the students. There is a large surplus of specialists in economics, law, social sciences and shortages in areas such as physics, chemistry, medicine, information technology. That is why less than one fifth of graduates work corresponding to their professional field and the others are unemployment or work in different area.

The data of the Employment Agency show that almost every third graduate without work in Bulgaria is economist, lawyer or with degree in social sciences such as philosophy, sociology, public administration. These disciplines are most popular in the country, despite warnings that the market is oversaturated with such specialists.

Professions in IT technology - programmers, project managers, specialists in data processing are the second highest deficit of footage after the medical professions - nurses, pharmacists, physicians. They are followed by engineers, sales representatives and accountants.

According to other scientists the main reason for the difficulties in realization of Bulgarian graduates is the lack of educational system corresponding to the modernizing economy, the low level of technology and the lack of innovation in Bulgarian companies.

There are two competing theses on the issue "education - labor market." The first one is that the education significantly lags behind the needs of the modernizing economy, and the second one is that Bulgaria has good traditions in education, but the low technological level of the majority of the existing firms in the country, their weak ability to innovate, and because of unemployment, well-trained employees cannot find relevant to their qualification and their specialization realization.

Main problem of Bulgarian education is the lack of practical orientation – too much theory, a little practice. In order to reach the changes, the business with its needs should be included in the allocation of positions for specialties in the universities. Coordinated work of the business with the government can lead to proper allocation of students by majors in relation with the regions that they will evolve professionally.

The change of the range and focus of the education should not be an aim in itself - reforms must be designed carefully according to country-specific goals and requirements on the labor market.

It is necessary to include innovations, which will contribute for better educational system and better education as a whole.

The need for changes in education is big and the relationships with the business, too. Over the several years there is a slight progress - updated curricula. It is in accordance with the European. To a certain extent it has been established an initial connection with the business, but still everything is very timid.

The state lacks a policy for the realization of graduates and their detention in Bulgaria. System for studying the needs of the labor market, in general, is missing. In contrast to Bulgaria, the European countries with coordinated relations between the labor market and education successfully find jobs of young graduates and managed to keep them in the country.

EU countries with coordinated links between the education and the labor market are usually seen as successful in providing a favorable integration of young people into paid employment. Coordination in this context means involvement of employers in controlling and directing professional skills and qualifications.)

Another problem of Bulgarian education is the level of knowledge and skills that students receive during their training. In the absence of basic knowledge and skills, for graduates is difficult to integrate into the labor market.

The demand for highly educated students is growing, but the majority of graduates in Bulgaria are poorly prepared for the labor market.

The knowledge and skills acquired as a result of education are a key factor of integration or exclusion from the labor market - they determine the economic impact of education on the labor market.

In order to be Bulgarian education qualitatively, it has to be practically orientated and consistent with the business needs. It will be a challenge for the educational system, but will undoubtedly help to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills among the graduates and their detention in Bulgaria through a successful realization in their chosen field of activity.

Methodology. To establish the success or the failure of students graduated in Bulgaria, in the labor market, the survey was conducted in the form of a poll. The study involved 30 Bulgarian companies and includes various questions about what knowledge, skills and competencies possess graduates. Questionnaire contains 8 questions about: communication and interpersonal skills, cognitive skills, motivation and attitude towards work, ability to work with data and IT, organization and time management, ethics, experience and personal qualities.

Survey. The first group of abilities is about communication and interpersonal skills. According to most interviewed firms, the students are the least prepared in foreign language skills and written communication skills. Their verbal communication skills, skills in teamwork and respect for others are on average level.

The second group of skills is cognitive skills. The group includes: analytical thinking, problem solving skills, learning abilities, intellectual skills, understanding the activity in the organization, curiosity, innovation, applying theory to practical situations. 1/3 of respondents believe that in general students have good knowledge and skills in this category. Graduates experience difficulties and show low results in the application of theory to practical situations, innovation and analytical thinking.

The third group of competences is about motivation and attitude towards work - willingness to work, responsibility, enthusiasm, positive attitude to work, initiative, orientation towards the goals, willingness to develop, willingness to learn. 1/4 of employers assessed as weak following skills of students - initiative, willingness to work, enthusiasm, orientation towards the goals and responsibility.

The fourth group of skills is about ability to work with data and IT - ability to work with numbers, mathematical literacy, ability to summarize and analyze data, ability to work with information technology and computer skills. The biggest problem employers see in students' skills is their ability to summarize and analyze data. Students have a high level of computer skills and ability to work with information technology.

The fifth group of abilities is connected to organizing and time management. Based on the five skills - planning activities, independence, skills for planning time, completing tasks on time and work under pressure, employers are unanimous in their opinion that the students do not possess the necessary qualities for any of the criteria.

The sixth group includes competences about ethics and adaptation to the corporate culture. According to all respondents, students are not prepared and do not have the necessary skills in all three areas which are included here - adherence to professional and ethical standards, compliance with the rules in the organization and adapting to the corporate culture and standards.

The seventh group of skills is about experience. Employers are not satisfied with previous experience of the candidates as well as their experience related to the same job. On the other hand, experience related to another job, does not matter for the companies.

The eighth group of abilities is personal qualities. The students' performance here is on average level. Some of the skills are - honesty, self-esteem, emotional stability, kindness, openness to criticism, sociability, empathy, acceptance of other opinions, tolerance, friendly, willing to help, leadership, initiative, punctuality.

According to many employers, graduates do not receive the necessary knowledge, skills and qualifications during their education. For them, it is not enough only the candidate to study and finish some specialty, but to have experience, too. Education must fulfill both the requirements of economic efficiency and the individual preferences of employers.

Conclusion. There are perspectives with different directions for Bulgarian educational system that can successfully lead to the future prosperity of graduates. Some of them are:

- 1) The business to be actively involved in the development of curricula and strategies.
- 2) Introduction of mandatory practice and internships in real business and manufacturing environment.
- 3) Consultation of students and graduates regarding their professional orientation and opportunities for professional development.
- 4) To include speakers from business with practical orientation on the study material. Universities to invite real life businessman to explain the practices in the industry.
- 5) Business to motivate the students by providing scholarships, awards, contracts for students with special projects and achievements.
- 6) Investments in training teachers to adapt to the new technologies and discoveries.

The process will be difficult for Bulgarian educational system, but it is vital for the successful future development of young graduates and their detention in Bulgaria.

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Атанасова В. Л. - Варненський університет менеджменту, Болгарія. **ПРОБЛЕМИ І ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ РОЗВИТКУ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ БОЛГАРІЇ**

Анотація: У статті представлено проблеми болгарської системи освіти, що проявляються через дефіцит та надлишок фахівців окремих спеціальностей та труднощі працевлаштування випускників університетів. Досліджено рівень знань, навичок і компетенцій, які студенти отримують після закінчення університету. Визначено проблеми і перспективи, які стоять перед болгарською системою освіти, запропоновано бізнес-думку з цього питання.

Ключові слова: освіта, ринок праці, бізнес, знання, навички, компетенції

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