Enhancing Youth Employability as a Result of Creating Linkages between Vocational Education Sector and Private Agricultural Sector in Kosovo

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Abstract

The agribusiness and Agriculture sector is the main field of economy in Kosovo and it is sector that contributes to social viability, employment and economic development. While in Kosovo on the basis of statistics from the results of the Kosovo labor force survey 2014, shows that Kosovo stands in the worst labor market situation in comparison to the Western Balkan countries and the 27 European Union member countries. The unemployment rate in Kosovo is 30%, from these percentage 55.9% of the unemployed were young people (aged 15-24 years) and the share of female population is higher 68.4%. The labor force participation rate in Kosovo is 40.5 % while the participation rate in Western Balkan countries ranges between 60 to 68% and it is 71.8% in European Union countries. Part of these differences is due to the fact that Kosovo has such a young population and many of these young people are still in education (and therefore classified as inactive). A concern is that over time the potential for the inactive population to grow remains high as each year approximately 36,000 young people will enter the working age population (i.e., 14 year olds will become 15 year olds) while only approximately 10,000 will leave the working age population (i.e., 64 year olds becoming 65 year olds). Very strikingly, the labor force participation rate of women is significantly lower in Kosovo than its neighbors¹. This study intends to serve as a key tool for identifying the gaps between vocational education sector and private agricultural sector in Kosovo, which impact directly to the unemployment rate. The research addressed identified gaps of the VET schools and Private sector, their needs, areas of focus, specific needed activities in order to create the favorable conditions to link these two important sectors and enhance youth employability.

Keywords: VET schools, agribusiness sector, youth employment,

1. Introduction

In order to have better understanding of gaps and needs of Agribusiness sector and VET schools, we conducted the assessment with private sector companies and three main VET schools in Kosovo. Considering the agriculture and agribusiness fields as main potentials of rapid youth employment, the Kosovo government with the support and cooperation different donor agencies and organization experienced and active in this sector aims to enhance and support this potential among youth of 17-20 ages who graduate in vocational secondary agriculture schools, enhancing of the youth employability should work on improving theoretical, practical needed skills and linking with private sector. Through these efforts they should up upgrade the level of qualitative professional skills among youth in order to enhance their opportunities for employment during attending or after completion of secondary vocational education. On the other side it seems to be a low interest of Kosovo society, particularly of youth to work in agriculture, even though this society has a long tradition working in agriculture and Kosovo has an appropriate terrain / land and climate of growing agriculture products. So far, in Kosovo we miss tracer information about youth who have already completed the secondary vocational education in agriculture. Where and how they may have continued their further career, through continuation of University studies or through employment / self-employment in the agribusiness industry (or others), even the second issue is not as sustainable as the unemployment level among youth in Kosovo is very high. Unemployment and its impact

¹ Kosovo Agency of Statistics

on young people are serious issues that affect the development and wellbeing of Kosovo youth. In a region where there is high youth unemployment, young people must be recognized as a resource for progressive economic development; therefore, the Government should create mechanisms to ensure that young people are involved in the economic development strategies, and that youth issues are considered as a priority²

2. Objectives of this Research

The objectives of this assessment are to:

- Develop a clear understanding of needs and the state of targeted VET schools and private agribusiness sector;
- Identify gaps and opportunities that can be addressed by Kosovo institutions and different donors active in this sector
- Develop specific approach and intervention methodologies and activities

3. Materials and Methods

The Questionnaire was conducted throughout Kosovo; first we developed selection criteria/methodology through including main subsectors, three levels of businesses and all value chain actors. Whereas businesses that were interviewed were selected based on these criteria:

- Small, medium and large agribusinesses
- Agribusinesses with potential growth for enhancing youth employability.
- Agribusinesses which were based in the same region as Agricultural VET Schools.
- Businesses that are registered (legal)
- Businesses they have products in the regional and international market

Interviews were carried out face - face with high level of management: owners, directors, coordinators etc. In terms of business activity all value chain actors were involved such as: producers, processors, traders, service providers etc. The sample was classified into municipalities' and regional level, based on the presence of the representative agribusinesses; the sample was different from one to other municipalities and from one to another region and level of businesses. The assessment was based on quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis. The 100 questionnaires were conducted with the agribusiness companies, 234 with VET students from the three schools and qualitative data with three school directors of VET schools from Pristina, Peja and Ferizaji.

4. Results of Research

4.1 Results obtained on the ground

Figure 1: % Assessment of business subsectors: producers, processors, traders, service providers,

² Kosovo Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2010-2012, page 12.

The majority of the respondents, about 67.0% answered that they belong to the producers sector, while 18 % of respondents were from the processing sector, 14 % of respondents were from agribusiness traders companies that deal with export-import, around 1% service providers. It means that the survey was conducted with biggest producers, and big processors, having higher development potential.

Figure 1: % of company subsectors

Regarding the question "What is the average age of the employees", majority of them 72.6 % of interviewed companies stated that average age is 25-34 years old, while 20 % stated that average age is 35-44 %, 4.2% of interviewed companies has workers in the average age 15- 24 and 3.2 % of respondents stated that have workers in their companies in average age more than 45 year

Figure 2: % of different types of employee contract

Figure 3: what types of work contract have the Employees

Regarding the figure 3 it is mean that 77.1% of employees have the regular contract, 13.5 % of employees without working contract and 9.4% of employees have the seasonal contract.

According the question "How do you announce vacancies for your employees, especially when they have freshly graduated from school? From the total number of companies 25.6 % stated that they employ fresh graduate through family connections, while 20.9% through the Employment office, 16.3% advertisement in newspaper and 11% of stated they announce

Figure 4: % of different announcement of vacancies

Figure 5: % of company's opinion regarding use of different instruments for hiring of fresh graduates

Regarding the question about the means that companies use for hiring the fresh graduates 40% of companies stated that they use test at their company, 35% using interviews and 16% looking to the Curriculum vitae and very low % about 6% consider the recommendations. It is meaning that most appropriate tool for youth employment is tests at their company and interviews. Regarding the figure 6 the most of companies around 78.7% stated that they satisfied with the youth work (fresh graduates) and 21.3 % give the negative opinion regarding satisfaction with youth work.

Figure 6: % of satisfaction with youth work **Figure 7:** % preferences of companies for Institutions where youth Employees come from?

It is interesting that the private sector around 56.8% preferred young employees to come from VET schools, while 30.7 from public universities, 11.4 from professional certification institutions and very low % from private universities around 1.1%. So agribusiness companies are optimistic about students that came from Agribusiness VET schools. Findings indicate that about 79.2 percent of companies stated that they are interested to employ young people from VET Schools while 20.8 percent they aren't interested. In conclusion the agribusiness companies seem to be very interesting in employing the youth from VET schools.

Figure 8: Are you interested to employ young **Figure 9:** Did you ever have internships in your company?

4.2 People from VET Schools

According to the figure in left side 79.2 percent companies are interest in employing the youth form VET schools. Results presented in Figure 9 reveal that for almost 76.6 percent had the internships while 23.4 percent didn't had internships before. Since in the figure bellow is presented the joint activity between Companies and VET schools, most of the joint activities were the exchange visits 73 percent, participation in job fairs 20 percent while other activities as open school days and participation of student in joint promotion of companies' products are in very low level.

Table 1 outlines the % of companies interest in particular profile. It seems the interviewed companies are more interesting for wood technology (100 %), Horticulture profile (62.0%), food technology (57.8%), plant protection (10.8%), crop and vegetable production (10.8%) while the other profile are less required from the agribusiness companies. It is mean that we have to target the students from these profiles and link with the companies in order to address their needs and contribute to youth employability and employment.

Table 1: % of inters of companies for Agribusiness profiles according to sectors and subsectors

Nr.	VET Agribusiness profile	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Farmer profile	9.5	85.5
2	Horticulture	62.0	38.0
3	Crop and vegetable growing	10.8	89.2
4	Food technology	57.8	42.2
5	Veterinary	2.4	97.6
6	Forestry	4.0	96.0
7	Livestock	3.6	96.4
8	Plant protection	10.8	89.2
9	Tree –viticulture	6.0	94.0
10	Wood technology	100	0

Table 2 outlines the % of importance of different working skills of VET students for agribusiness companies. It seems the very important skills for interviewed companies are these skills: skill to do "Quality of work, attention to details" (90.8 %), Team working (84.5 %), Knowledge for using equipment (75.6 %), experience in similar positions (61.2 %), Communication Skills (59.8 %), interpersonal skills (53.7%) and important skills are Formal education (64.3%), Foreign language skills (57%), Training and certification (54.8%).

Table 2: % of importance of different working skills of VET students for agribusiness companies

Nr		Not Important	Important	Very important
1	How important is the work experience in similar positions	3.5	35.3	61.2
2	How important is Formal education	8.3	64.3	27.4
3	How important is the Trainings and Certifications	20.2	54.8	25.0
4	How important is the Knowledge using equipment	3.7	19.5	75.6
5	How important is the Foreign language skills	14.0	57.0	29.0
6	How important is the Communication Skills	8.0	32.2	59.8
7	How important is the Interpersonal skills	7.3	39.0	53.7
8	How important is the Quality of work, attention to details	9.2	0.0	90.8
9	How important is the Team working	15.5	0.0	84.5

Regarding the question 10" Did you have any joint activity with the VET schools", 73% of companies interviewed stated that one of activities which was most frequented is exchange visits between two sectors, 20% job fairs, 5% of companies stated that they engaged student for promotion of their companies product, while very low percent 2% in open school days. It is meaning that one of most appropriated activities between these two sectors is exchange visits and job fairs.

Figure 10: % of joint activities between companies and VET schools

Regarding the question in the figure 11 "Are you willing to accept internships in your business in order to develop

practical knowledge "most of companies 73.9 percent gave the positive answer while 26.1 percent stated no.

Figure 11: % Companies willing to accept internships in their companies

The most of companies in the past supported the internships activity with providing to the students the additional contribution like: food, transport, half wage, and paid training course. In line with responses related to the different contributions of companies for internships most of the companies 67.1 percent stated that they provided food for students, 33.0 provided the half wage, 31.8 provide the transport and 21.2 percent of companies stated that they have paid training courses.

Table 3: % Different contributions of companies' for internships

Nr.	Contributions of companies for internships	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Providing food	67.1	32.9
2	Providing the transport	31.8	68.2
3	Half wage	33.0	67.0
4	Paid training course	21.2	78.8

In the Figure bellow regarding the question about "Do the companies plan to expand their businesses", most of them 93.7 percent declare yes and low percent 6.3 percent declare no.

Figure 12: % companies that plan to expand their businesses

In additional regarding the question about the plans of companies in future 93 present of companies plan to expand their businesses while 63% increase productivity, 50% increase number of employees and low number of companies stated 44.4 percent are interest to expand new product.

Table 4: Plans of companies in future

Nr.		Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Do you plan to expand your business?	93.7	6.3
2	Do you plan to increase number of employees	50.0	50.0
3	Do you plan to expand your business increase productivity	63.0	37.0
4	Do you plan to expand your business with the new product	44.4	55.6

With regard to question which is presented in the figure 13 we receive very interesting answer that 50 percent of companies declare that they plan to increase number of employees and 50 percent no. It is mean that we are satisfied with the businesses declarations regarding the potential readiness to increase number of employees

Figure 13: % companies that they plan to increase the number of employees in near future

4.3 Assessment of VET student of agribusiness schools

The assessment was also conducted with the 234 VET students in three Agribusiness VET schools: Abdyl Frasheri in Prishtina, Zenel Hajdini in Ferizaj municipality and Ali Hadri in Peja municipality. 234 students were interviewed face to face in order to identify their gaps and opportunities regarding employability and employment. The interviews were distributed in the three schools based on number of VET student that schools possess and the profiles that businesses are interest. The 43.5% of student interviewed were from school "Zenel Hajdini", 36.0 % from VET school "Avdyl Frasheri" and 20.5% from VET school "Ali Hadri".

Figure 14: % of students interviewed in the three **Figure 15:** % of different profiles of students interviewed VET schools

The different profiles of student were interviewed during the assessment, the one of most frequented was the food processing profile which in this assessment presents 58.3%, 12.3% of veterinary profile, 10.2% vegetable production profiles, 6.4 % Arboriculture profile. The request of KCC to conduct the interviews with the profiles which were most requested from the private sector.

According to the question for VET schools which is showed in the figure 17 below 50.2% of students belong to the 12th classes and 49.8 % belong to the 13th classes, which mean that almost 50:50 of different classes represented their opinion about skills, gaps and needs.

Figure 16: % of different classes that were interviewed

Figure 17: How they decided to enroll the Agriculture VET school

According to the figure 18 above we see that even it was thought that majority of students were enforced from family or they were not able to enroll in other schools, based on the percent presented above most of them liked this field and it was their decision 40.6%, they see that this field is profitable 27.2%, agriculture is their carrier 14.6% and 12.6% were not able to be registered and enroll other schools.

According to the information presented in the table above it is mean that 59.8 % of VET students which participated in the assessment were male while 40.2% female. Even was thought that most of student from the agribusiness VET schools are male it doesn't mean in our case the food technology profile increased rapidly the % of female participated in the assessment. Most of the VET students in this assessment came from rural areas 52.6% which mean potential for dealing practically with this field is possible.

Table 5: % of basic information of VET student which were interviewed

Gender		Residential location	
M	59.8%	Urban	47.4%
F	40.2%	Rural	52.6%

Looking to the answers of students in the table above majority of them stated that they plan to continue the agriculture faculty 85.3 % which is in opposite of other answerers that they are interest to be increase their capacities and know how to find the jobs.

Table 6: % of student's opinions about market demand for their qualifications

How do you develop your career in agriculture sector	
I will be employed in agribusiness as technical	10.9%
I will become a farmer	3.8%
I will continue studies at the faculty of agriculture	85.3%

In the table below we can see that more than half of student 50.2 % stated that they do not have information about labor market demand for their qualifications, 36.1 % they stated yes there is demand and 13.7% stated no there is no demand for their qualifications.

Table 7: % of different options of VET students regarding the labor market demand for their qualifications

Do you think there is demand in the labor market to hire people with qualifications obtained only by agricultural secondary education	
Yes	36.10%
No	13.7%
I don't know	50.2%

Based on students statements the one of most required profile is the food technology 80.8%, next is the arboriculture 10.8 and horticulture. Which mean that also the number of students is oriented based on their thoughts and opinions in these profiles.

Figure 18: % of statements of students regarding the VET students **Figure 19:** % of opinions of VET students profiles regarding reasons for Demand for employment of

According to the students statement there are few reasons which impacts direct youth employment based on student opinions. One of the most cited is the answer "there is no requirement for employment in the agricultural sector (36.9%), followed by the answer that "there are no large farms in Kosovo" around 33.8 %, 23.4% of students think that large farms are usually family business while small scale 5.9 % is that everyone is involved in Agriculture.

According to the question "Which is most preferred method for job search for young people from VET students" based on students opinion the participation on job fair is the one of most preferred methods around 33.2% followed by 31.9% is the announcements of job vacancies through media, printed media, TV and radio, 16.6% municipal employment office and through the internet 12.2 % .KCC come to the conclusion that organizing the planned activities such as Job fair and cooperation with municipal employment office is in the right track but enforcement with cooperation with media will be addressed in future.

Figure 20: % of preferred methods for job search youth to base on students option **Figure 21:** % of different obstacles that discourage to look for jobs

According to additional question regarding the main obstacles that discourage students to look for job, there are few obstacles according to their statements 36.6 % there are no job available, 19.0% missing information about available jobs, 15.9% there are no direct link and information, 9.9% there is also a nepotism which is one of obstacles.

Figure 22: % of different efforts by schools for VET students to develop relationship with the private sector

According to the question "Are there efforts by schools to develop the relationship with the private sector for the continuation of the practice of Agribusiness school students? If yes, what activities, based on students statements there are the initiatives but almost all the activities are in low scale. Internship is one of activity which is most enforced (36.4%), practical training by 27.2% while visits to companies 24.1% and others are in very low scale.

5. Discussion

It is estimated that over 50% of Kosovo population is under the age of 30. This fact requires for immediate actions to be taken regarding the education and integration of young generations. A direct consequence of lack of investments in the youth is that a country is wasting young potentials for its development. Youth Strategy in Kosovo adopts an integrated approach for social, economic and political participation of youth in society. In particular, youth need formal and informal education, in line with the needs of labor market, they need youth-friendly health-care services, more security, employment, recreational activities and for participating in decision-making³

Although youth employment remains high on the government's agenda, the policy-making process remains characterized by lack of coherence and coordination between ministries and between central and local government. Hence, the most disadvantaged areas of Kosovo have difficulties in translating the objectives of the youth employment policy into programmes that address the multiple disadvantages faced by young people. The provision of well-targeted active employment measures to young unemployed registered at the Public Employment Service (PES) also depends on the enhanced administrative capacity of public employment services. Furthermore, while creating full employment for Kosovo's young people in the short to medium term will not be possible, a number of measures (requiring external assistance to establish and support, at least initially) could go some way towards easing the unemployment tension. Some of these measures are oriented towards raising the level of qualifications of young people and better matching between VET and labour market needs such as: developing tertiary non-university education (which currently appears as a gaping omission in the country's learning framework) or introducing youth-specific and targeted vocational training provision clearly correlated to existing skills gaps.⁴

6. Conclusion

Findings from assessment of private sector

Based on the results of quantitative analysis it could be easy to come to the following findings that Agribusinesses that were interviewed belong to small, medium and large businesses. The interviewed businesses belong to these subsectors: big food processing (fruit, vegetable, potato, meat, milk etc), livestock farms, traders (wholesalers, retailers and hypermarket chain), farmers with a large growing area that are large producers of fruits, vegetables and sale them as

³ Strategy components – an overview of youth situation in Kosovo

well. These subsectors were selected for interview bearing in mind the fact that they are subsectors with an increased development and promise generation of vacancies. These are subsectors that impact the macroeconomic development of Kosovo. Their geographical position is in the regions near the VET schools, which is one of the reasons that they are selected and that it is very easy to connect VET schools and companies. Therefore, in terms of the agricultural business that were interviewed, despite many difficulties, the data are encouraging, because more than 80% of them are interested to develop (increase) business, develop new products, increase productivity, and increase the number of employees (especially small and medium businesses)

1. The most average age of the employees around 72.6 % are 25-34 years old. It is mean that agribusiness companies don't have lot employees from the young generation.
2. In the other side the most of companies around 78.7% stated that they satisfied with the youth work (fresh graduates)
3. It is interesting that the private sector around 56.8% preferred young employees to come from public VET schools, 30.7 from public universities, 11.4 from professional certification institutions and very low % from private universities around 1.1%. So agribusiness companies are optimistic about students that came from Agribusiness VET schools.
4. In conclusion the agribusiness companies seems to be very interesting in employing the youth from VET schools and interesting profiles are wood technology (100 %), Horticulture profile (62.0%), food technology (57.8%), plant protection (10.8%), crop and vegetable production (10.8%) while the other profile are less required from the agribusiness companies.
5. Required skills from the companies : skills to do "Quality of work, attention to details" (90.8 %), Team working (84.5 %), Knowledge for using equipment (75.6 %), experience in similar positions (61.2 %), Communication Skills (59.8 %), interpersonal skills (53.7%) and important skills are Formal education (64.3%), Foreign language skills (57%), Training and certification (54.8%)
6. Almost majority of companies plan to expand businesses, increase productivity and most important think increase number of employees.

7. Findings from Assessment of VET Students

The interviews were distributed in the three schools based on number of VET student that schools possess and the profiles that businesses are interest. The 43.5% of student interviewed were from school "Zenel Hajdini", 36.0 % from VET school "Avdyll Frasheri" and 20.5% from VET school "Ali Hadri". The different profiles of student were interviewed during the assessment, the one of most frequented was the food processing profile which in this assessment presents 58.3%, 12.3% of veterinary profile, 10.2% vegetable production profiles, 6.4 % Arboriculture profile. Most of the VET students in this assessment came from rural areas 52.6% which mean potential for dealing practically with this field is possible.

1. According to the figure above we see that even it was thought that majority of students were enforced from family or they were not able to enroll in other schools, based on the percent presented above most of them liked this field and it was their decision 40.6%, they see that this field is profitable 27.2%, agriculture is their carrier 14.6% and 12.6% were not able to be registered and enroll other schools.
2. Half of students 50.2 % stated that they do not have information about labor market demand for their qualifications, 36.1 % they stated yes there is demand and 13.7% stated no there is no demand for their qualifications. From % of student which stated that there is demand and one of most required profile is the food technology 80.8%, next is the arboriculture 10.8 and horticulture. Which mean that also the number of students is oriented based on their thoughts and opinions in these profiles.
3. According to the students statement there are few reasons which impacts direct youth employment based on student opinions. One of the most cited is the answer "there is no requirement for employment in the agricultural sector (36.9%)", followed by the answer that "there are no large farms in Kosovo" around 33.8 %, 23.4% of students think that large farms are usually family business while small scale 5.9 % is that everyone is involved in Agriculture.
4. According to the question "Which is most preferred method for job search for young people from VET students" based on students opinion the participation on job fair is the one of most preferred methods around 33.2% followed by 31.9% is the announcements of job vacancies through media, printed media, TV and radio, 16.6% municipal employment office and through the internet 12.2 % .

5. According to additional question regarding the main obstacles that discourage students to look for job, there are few obstacles according to their statements 36.6 % there are no job available, 19.0% missing information about available jobs, 15.9% there are no direct link and information, 9.9% there is also a nepotism which is one of obstacles.
6. According to the question "Are there efforts by schools to develop the relationship with the private sector for the continuation of the practice of Agribusiness school students? If yes, what activities, based on students statements there are the incentives but almost all the activities are in low scale.
7. The most required activity to be supported for increasing capacities are: searching for jobs for graduate, participation in job fair, career guidance for students, visit to the company's and support and ensuring of places for internship in private sector.

8. Recommendations

Based on findings from the both assessment and in order to address gaps and needs of Agribusiness sector and VET schools aimed to enhance youth employability and employment the institutions should follow up these recommendations:

1. Work very close with private sector in order to increase awareness regarding the Capacities of VET student from VET schools and organize as much as possible joint activities.
2. Identify agribusiness companies which expressed interest to work and have joint activity with the mentions VET schools;
3. Based on the finding and close cooperation with the education sector prepare the list of students which belong to the required profiles from the companies and work close with them to increase required capacities;
4. Organize the trainings and workshops with identified list of VET students in order to increase their capacities.;
5. The trainings should be focused on these required topics in order to increase skills Training on CV writing, interviewing, and job search skills in each of the three regions, conduct training for the project proposal writing, business plan writing;
6. Strength the relations with other stakeholders engaged in this field without omitted public sector such us: Ministry of labor and social welfare, Ministry of education, sciences and technology and regional employment offices;
7. Organize the regional job fairs;
8. Produce the promotion materials in order to increase the awareness and opportunities of all institutions and private sector companies about unused power and capacities of VET students;
9. Establish tracking system that will monitor on quarterly bases number of students employed (inter, part or full time) after the project is completed

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