

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP IN MATCHING GRADUATES' SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO BUSINESS SECTOR NEEDS

Rashit Emini

South East European University – Tetova, Republic of Macedonia

E mail: r.emini@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract

This paper assesses the role of higher education leadership in appropriately matching skills and knowledge of graduates to the business sector's needs in the Republic of Macedonia. It examines what actions have been undertaken by the SEEU management to develop the cooperation of SEEU with the business sector in Macedonia in terms of matching various jobs in the business sector to the various competencies that are developed at SEE University Tetova. It also examines the perceptions and views of both business sector in the Republic of Macedonia and the SEE University Tetova officials about this interaction and on the importance of the appropriate graduate skills and knowledge in developing businesses in Republic of Macedonia. To this end, we have conducted a survey and interviews with both the University officials and the business sector managers and representatives. The outcome of this research shows that although the SEEU consults the business sector when opening study programs it needs more efforts to streamline and include the most important skills and knowledge in the study programs, specifically faculty curricula, to enable a better match between skills and knowledge of SEEU graduates and the business sector needs.

Keywords: *higher education leadership, graduates' skills and knowledge, business sector jobs, curricula design, course creation*

Introduction:

In the recent years higher education institutions (HEIs) and the business sectors worldwide have increased their efforts to find more issues of common interest in which to cooperate. There are numerous reasons for this. One of the many reasons for this phenomenon is their mission to contribute to the economic development of the countries where they operate. Universities provide workforce for the business market and help with research, whereas businesses tend to increase productivity and the welfare of the citizens. Furthermore, according to Atlan (1990) and Peters & Fusfeld (1982) in Emini (2010) there are several reasons that are meant to increase the cooperation between universities and the business sector besides access to workforce (well trained graduates and well trained teaching staff), such as access to research results and its applicability in the business sector in order to contribute to the evolution of productivity and new processes; the solution of specific problems or professional expertise that some companies do not have in their structure; access to curricula design in closer cooperation with faculty academicians directly; help in life long learning and training; and other areas.

Therefore, in order for them to better cooperate they have developed many joint ventures including creating joint study programs that contain specific curricula for specific jobs in the business market. In recent years the businesses have undergone many changes, especially with the advancement of technology, therefore universities tend to follow and try to meet their changing needs by adapting curricula and teaching to their requirements. Thus, the role of the HEIs' leadership and management in carrying out this mission is very important especially in creating a system within their institutions that would enable a better match between their graduates' skills and knowledge and the various positions in the business sector.

With regard to this specific cooperation in matching skills and knowledge to specific and changing market jobs a need for a thorough transformation of the system of creating and designing curricula and courses from theoretical and teacher centred to more competency based curricula and student centred curricula and courses is increasing in time. This transformation is meant to design more market driven study programs which would serve the specific company needs. This process is also meant to make direct involvement of the business sector in the universities' business of creating and designing of curricula and courses for specific business purposes.

In this regard this paper tries to reveal efforts of the SEEU leadership in inducing a more specific cooperation between SEEU Tetova and the business sector in the Republic of Macedonia, especially with regard to matching specific graduates' skills and knowledge to the specific market jobs. It also tries to reveal the actual system of work in terms of curricula design and course creation at SEEU Tetova. It gives detailed information on the employability of SEEU Tetova graduates in the business market of the Republic of Macedonia for a period of 5 years. It also provides information on the efforts of the SEEU leadership to improve and adjust the system of transmission of theoretical and practical knowledge in the fields of study that would increase employability of SEEU Tetova graduates.

Furthermore, this paper also seeks to reveal the current situation with regard to SEEU efforts in creating study programs which are in line with the needs of the society in general and the business sector in particular. In other words graduates from SEEU are supposed to give a contribution to the overall good of the society and contribute to the development of the economy of the country. Therefore, this university-business sector cooperation should be enhanced over time.

This study also seeks to reveal the career opportunities of SEEU graduates and their employability. It also investigates the efforts of the University leadership to continue developing study programs and courses from the old paradigm of teacher centred classes (transfer of knowledge) to the new paradigm of student centred classes (learning by the student) (Mager, 1975, p.18 in Leoni, 2011). This would otherwise mean formulating higher education management policies that would focus on learning outcomes on a metalevel, since these will reflect the nature of the qualification as a whole, that is, that will incorporate both the knowledge required and the competencies (skills and knowledge) understood as observable and measurable behaviours that would meet ever changing business sector's needs (Mager, 1975, p.18 in Leoni, 2011).

Aim of study/research:

This research consists of a case study, a questionnaire for the business sector in Republic of Macedonia that was distributed to 40 companies, an interview with the Provost and the Pro-Rector for Academic Affairs at SEE University Tetova, Professor Andrew Goodspeed, an interview with the SEE University Career Center Director, Lumturije

Mehmedi-Sinani and the data analysis that were extracted from the Employability Reports of the SEE University Career Center.

The aim of the questionnaire was to investigate the opinion of the companies' representatives from the business sector in the Republic of Macedonia in terms of matching SEEU graduates's skills and knowledge to their respective company jobs. Its goal was also to get the companies representatives' opinions on the possibility of increasing the cooperation between SEEU Tetova and the business sector in curricula design and course creation to better match SEEU graduates' skills and knowledge to their respective jobs in their companies. Its goal was also to find out about the impressions and opinions of the business sector representatives in the Republic of Macedonia regarding the preparedness of SEE University graduates to do the work in various business sector positions right after graduation, that is, the companies were asked to provide information regarding the SEEU graduates' competencies at the time of taking the positions or starting a job in their companies. Only companies who had hired SEE University graduates were selected to be surveyed. The list of companies that cooperate with SEEU Tetova was provided by the SEE University Career Center.

In addition, two interviews were conducted. The first one was conducted with the Provost and Pro-Rector for Academic Affairs at SEE University Tetova. It aimed to acquire relevant information from the top level management of SEEU Tetova regarding their efforts to meet the changing needs of the business market. It especially aimed to acquire more detailed information with regard to the current system of curricula design and employability of SEEU graduates. The second interview was conducted with the SEE University Career Center Director. It aimed to reveal the concrete actions that SEEU Career Center had undertaken to help both the business sector in Republic of Macedonia and the SEEU graduates with regard to matching the graduates' skills and knowledge to the specific job requirement that the business sector has.

Furthermore, employability reports of SEE University graduates to the business sector for years 2008-2012 were analysed and interpreted. The analysis of the reports for the period of 5 years aimed to reveal the trends and developments in terms of employability of SEEU graduates in the business market in Republic of Macedonia. The data were analysed and shown in graphic modes.

Research topics:

This research covers topics related to higher education leadership and management, in particular, it treats the topic of curricula design and course creation aiming to meet the demands of the business sector. It also covers the topic of employers' attitudes and opinions about the quality of higher education graduates especially in the period when they start jobs. There are numerous books and scientific papers and articles that treat the topic of employability of HEIs' graduates in the labor market, with most focusing on matching the graduates' skills and knowledge to the labor market needs. This issue was treated from various perspectives and natures. Most of the studies that treat this issue focus on matching of graduates' majors to business sector positions; but another aspect is matching graduates' degrees to business sector positions, and a third aspect is curricula development (and design) and course creation based on set international standards (Dublin descriptors) for overturning knowledge transmission curricula to competency based curricula, etc.

Most of these studies reveal the importance of overturning the old paradigm of transmission of knowledge (more theoretical than practical) to the new competency based paradigm (skills and knowledge, i.e. more practical than theoretical) to increase the

possibility of HEIs to contribute more to the society by matching HE policies to the new trends and developments in the labor market. Therefore, the need for adjusting university education by a policy oriented to the employability goal is arising nowadays (Leoni, 2011). Furthermore, Leoni (2011) reveals the fact that many European policy makers in recent years, especially after 90s, have turned towards a profound transformation and convergence of the higher education system in order to match the new arising needs of the business sector generated by recent technological advancements and innovations in production and work in general.

In line with the thoughts of Leoni (2011) other researchers reveal the fact that many graduates get jobs unrelated to their majors or even degrees. Although, according to Plumer (2013) the probability of finding a job related to the degree is higher than that of finding a job that matches one's college major. Therefore, Robst (2006) suggests that students prior to enrolling in universities should also consider the potential of finding employment in a job related to their major. In this line Robst (2007) reveals some figures that show that 45% of the work of the employees he surveyed was partially related or not related to their field of study. Furthermore, he claims that the first thing to be considered before everything else including the wages is the ability to perform well, to have the necessary skills to do the job, since it is an important factor which would ensure income generation. He also says that graduates being unable to find employment reduces the chances of returning their investment in their education. However, the mismatch of degrees with the business sector positions has been treated as a phenomenon that would have an impact on higher cost for an employee and for the enterprise even for the economy in general with higher wages and higher transaction costs on one hand and less job satisfaction and lower productivity and worse quality on the other hand (Leoni, 2011).

Similarly, there are researchers like Cohn and Kahn (1995), Duncan and Hoffman (1981) in Leuven & Oosterbeek, (2011) who treated the issue of matching studies to job positions in the business sector from the aspect of matching quantity of years of schooling to the required years of schooling for a job. This issue, however, has to do more with matching degrees (overeducated or undereducated graduates doing a particular job) to the specific positions in the business sector. This kind of research contributed towards research on the choice for college major.

The issue of successful matching of graduates' skills and knowledge and the business sector positions, in particular the role of higher education in transfer knowledge to society and its impact on economic development of countries and their competitiveness in the global market, has also become part of the Europe 2020 strategic plan, the Lisbon agenda and the modernisation agenda of European universities that the European Union has recently introduced. (Gibb & Hannon (2006), Storm (2008), Razvan & Dainora (2009), http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/uni-business-cooperation_en.pdf, page 25)

Therefore, efforts have been made to increase the cooperation of universities and the business sector in various fields, in particular in creating curricula that would match particular business sector jobs in order to raise their contribution to the economic development of the countries where they function.

Research questions:

Does SEEU Tetova design and create market driven curricula and courses and if yes at what level?

Do SEEU Tetova graduates' skills and knowledge match the business sector needs?

Do SEEU graduates get positions in the business sector that match their majors?

Scientific methods:

This research paper uses empirical research methods such as questionnaires and interviews. It also uses a case study for the paper analysis of the level of cooperation of SEEU Tetova and the business sector in the Republic of Macedonia in the field of matching graduates' competencies to the specific business sector needs. It also uses analytical research methods to analyse data provided by the Career Center at SEEU Tetova.

The methodology was selected to come up with data that would show how this phenomenon is treated at SEEU. Two interviews were conducted, one with the Provost and Pro-Rector for Academic Affairs at SEEU, Prof. Dr. Andrew Goodspeed, and the other one with the Director of the Career Center at SEEU Tetova Lumturije Mehmedi-Sinani, and a questionnaire for the business sector in Republic of Macedonia, in particular for companies and institutions that have hired SEEU graduates was distributed to the business sector in Republic of Macedonia, especially to companies in the city of Tetova, Republic of Macedonia. In addition, an attempt was made to create a solid theoretical frame that would give a contribution to this paper to give scientific recommendations that would help in improving the system of curricula design and course creation in particular to creating competency-based curricula at SEEU Tetova, that is, market driven study programs.

Data analysis:

The questionnaire was distributed to 40 companies that were on the list of the companies that the Career Center at SEEU provided. Furthermore, all of these companies have employed SEEU graduates in various sectors. The contacted companies deal with various businesses such as Information technology, telecommunication, banking, private schools, consultancy companies, engineering, logistics, marketing, wood industry, insurance companies, sports clothing production, food&drink wholesaler, production of colours and adhesives and mortars, distribution of electricity, language centers, production of construction materials, organizations dealing with culture and education, etc.

In the question 'How do you evaluate the competencies of the SEEU graduates in terms of matching your positions in your company?' ten (10) companies claimed that the graduates' competencies are very good, although they all claim that the graduates need some extra training or an induction period of 1 year at least, fifteen (15) companies claimed that the graduates' competencies are good although as the previous companies pointed out all the graduates need some extra training or an induction period of 1 year, and fifteen (15) companies said that the graduates' competencies are satisfactory since according to them graduates lack expertise or knowledge and lack practical work experience (graphically shown below in figure 1).

Figure 1 – Questionnaire with the business sector



Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

In terms of level of cooperation with SEEU most of the companies claimed that there is a sort of cooperation, however this is at a very low level and needs improvement. They also pointed out that the cooperation has to be institutionalised and that their input into the study programs has to get bigger.

As regards the question ‘if the study programs at SEEU are prepared based on business sector needs or not?’ twenty (20) companies replied that SEEU study programs are created based on business sector needs, eighteen (18) companies answered with neutral, whereas two (2) companies said that the study programs do not match business sector needs as shown in figure 2 below:

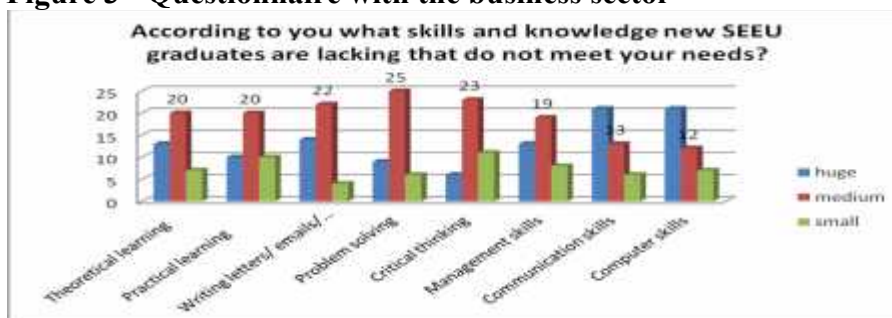
Figure 2 - Questionnaire with the business sector



Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

As regards the question that comprised some specific skills and knowledge to be evaluated by the business sector the answers are shown in figure 3 below.

Figure 3 - Questionnaire with the business sector



Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

Based on the answers given by 40 companies it is obvious that the majority of the companies have ticked medium as their answer which shows that SEEU graduates skills and knowledge for most of the surveyed companies are not at the highest level of the companies' expectations and that the graduates still need extra education and practical experience, however in their additional comments the companies claim that the graduates can still start jobs with the acquired learning combined with some induction period or professional development. There were companies who suggested that their employees who hold undergraduate degrees could enrol in Master studies.¹

Based on the data shown in figure 3 above the weakest points according to the companies are communication skills and computer skills. It is important to note as well that 14 out of 40 companies noted that the graduates lack writing skills and management skills. In the future SEEU will need to focus more on these two skills so that the graduates improve these two skills.

¹ This paper investigates employability of graduates who hold undergraduate degrees from SEE University in Tetova

The above given table in general shows the state of the graduates' competencies when they get employed in the business sector. It also shows which skills need more attention and development. In general the companies have ticked medium which indicates that graduates possess some skills and knowledge however they should work more on improving them so they can be more effective in the workplace.

In the controlling question How do you evaluate the quality of SEEU graduates to match the positions in your company the answer is as follows: ten (10) companies answered with high quality graduates, twenty eight (28) companies answered with medium quality graduates, whereas only 2 companies replied with low quality graduates. Again, ticking medium indicates that the quality of SEEU graduates is at medium level although there are individual cases when graduates excel. Furthermore, some companies replied that the quality of work that graduates perform depends more on individual graduates (see figure 4 below).

Figure 4 - Questionnaire with the business sector

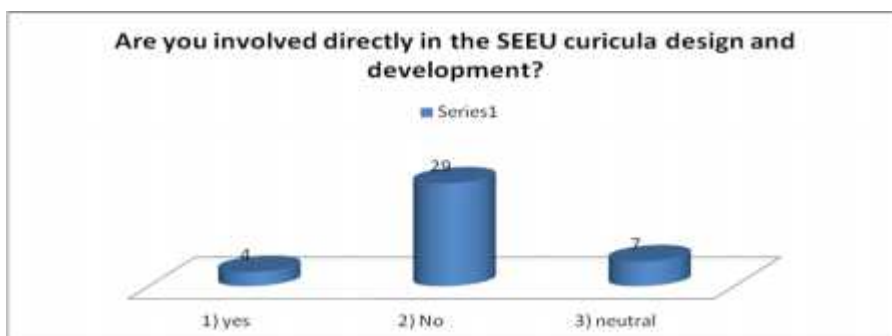


Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

Based on the data shown in figure 4 above it can be noticed that the SEEU graduates' competencies do not fully match the positions of the business sector, however the competencies are at a significant level. These answers as well confirm the previous answers given by them that the graduates lack some competencies or they are below the necessary level for specific positions and therefore the graduates need extra training and an induction period to get the necessary experience to do the work. In addition, as noted earlier, the graduates possess three year degrees only and also the companies that answered with medium may require specific expertise or postgraduates' skills and knowledge.

With regard to the question regarding the involvement of the business sector in the SEEU curricula design and development to better match their needs most of the companies as shown in figure 5 below answered negatively, that is they are not involved at all, whereas only companies that are involved in the Integrated Study Programs that offer studies in cooperation with the German Government such as Dauti Komerc, Ecolog, Prokredit Bank (see graph below) answered positively, that is that they are fully involved in the process of curricula design and course creation for some study programs at SEEU.

Figure 5 - Questionnaire with the business sector



Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

In the addition to the questionnaire an interview was conducted with some of the company representatives who elaborated on the answers that they had given to the questionnaire with some extra information. They said that in the future the Government of Macedonia should play a positive role especially with regard to improving and facilitating of the cooperation between universities and the business sector in the Republic of Macedonia by changing some legal provisions to enable a better cooperation between universities and the business sector in Macedonia. They think that there have to be some legal changes especially with regard to taxes towards the business sector in the Republic of Macedonia so that they could give their best for the higher education in Macedonia in general. And they also think that their involvement in the curricula design and course development for the study programs that will be offered in the future in SEEU would make study programs more market driven.

In most of the answers from the questionnaire the companies said that the level of matching of graduates' competencies with the positions in the business sector depends a lot on the graduate/ employee as well.

And eventually in the question what do graduates of SEEU Tetova mostly need 99% of them said practical work (that is, experience) and in some occasions even other subject knowledge and management skills.

The practical work of this paper as stated before comprise two more interviews one with the SEEU Tetova Career Center Director and the other one is with the Provost and Pro-Rector for Academic Affairs at SEEU Tetova.

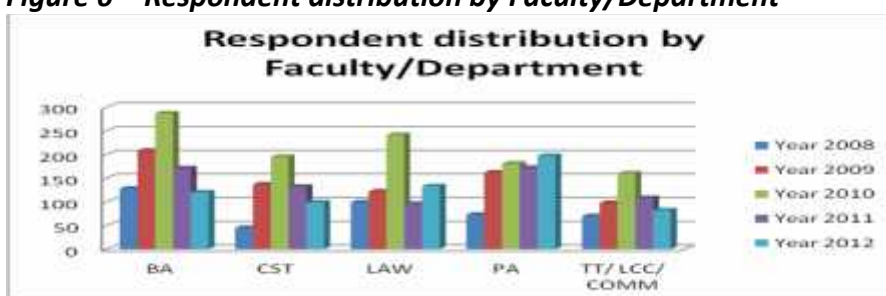
Based on the interview with Lumturije Mehmedi, Career Center Director, the Career Center at SEEU Tetova has superficial and unprocessed data (incomplete data) and based on that incomplete data she claimed that SEEU has made some agreements with the business sector in Republic of Macedonia for the clinical teaching, internships, and helping companies with list of graduates and their major. There are more than 126 companies that SEEU cooperates with, although there are names of companies that may have made one contact with and nothing more. With regard to clinical teaching it is carried out by the business sector's experts who come to SEEU Tetova to teach classes. Whereas, as regards the internship SEEU has been offered internships for its students. By December 2013 SEEU students are doing internships in EVN Makedonija, OKTA, Stopanska Banka, NLB Tutunska Banka, Alfabon, Johnson Controls, Johnson Meti, and other.

The employability reports provided by the Career Center at SEEU Tetova provided information on the employability of SEEU graduates especially with regard to matching of the graduates' competencies (skills and knowledge) with the various positions in the business sector. Furthermore, the employability reports provided information on the matching of majors and the various natures of the businesses in the business sector in Republic of Macedonia in general. Below there are some detailed information that were extracted from the Employability Reports 2008-2012 of SEEU Tetova Career Center that explain some

important components related to trends in the employability of SEEU graduates in the business market in Republic of Macedonia from 2009 to 2012.

The survey that the Career Center has carried out has been based on an entirely new methodology which differs from the previous years by including in the survey only graduates from the previous year, for instance in the Report for 2008 only graduates of 2007 are included, in the Report of 2009 only graduates of 2008 are included etc. The sample size of those surveyed has been 80% of the graduates due to lack of contact details of the graduates. The survey has been conducted either by email or telephone and the response rate has been 72.7%. As it states in the SEEU Employability Report for year 2007 at an overall response rate of 72.7%, and response rates above 90% at variable level, survey findings are believed to be highly reliable and valid. *Figure 6 below shows the respondent distribution in the survey based on the faculty or department.*

Figure 6 Respondent distribution by Faculty/Department



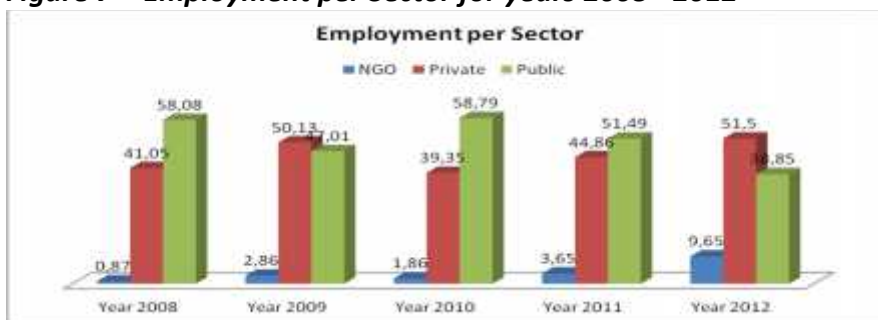
Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

In addition, figure 7 below shows the main employers of SEEU graduates for years 2007 and 2011 (Employability Reports 2008-2012). Figure 6 shows that in 2007 the main employer was the public sector with 58% of the total number of employed graduates. The main reason for phenomenon may be the implantation process of the Ohrid Agreement, which requires an adequate representation of various ethnic groups in public institutions. This trend is also presented in figure 7 below, presenting data at industry level, where Public Administration (excl. Public Educational institutions) is by far the largest employer of SEEU graduates with 37.12%, followed by the banking industry with 9.61%, and the secondary and primary education, respectively. Furthermore, the figure 7 below although lines the Government the first before the Education sector in 2012 still a decrease in percentage of graduates employed in the public sector in 2012 can be noticed (21.08%).

However, the trend of the public sector being the main employer shows a decrease in percentage from 58% to 38.85% and in the meantime the private sector is becoming the main employer for the SEEU graduates increasing the percentage from 2008 which was 41.05% to 51.05%.

As is stated in the SEEU Alumni Destination Surveys for years 2008-2012 the category “other” includes private enterprises, where it has been difficult to determine their field of operation due to missing responses and fields of operations that have shown to be too few to create their own category, such as training providers and foreign countries embassies.

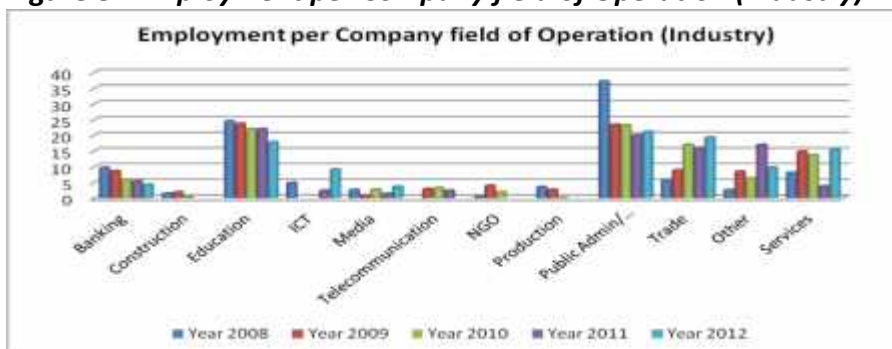
Figure 7 Employment per Sector for years 2008 - 2012



Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

In addition the survey as well consisted of a category that shows employability of SEEU graduates per company field of operation. Figure 8 below shows clearly that most SEEU graduates found jobs in the public sector especially in Public Administration or Government and education, whereas the rest of the data show distribution of SEEU graduates to the service sector, trade, banking and other.

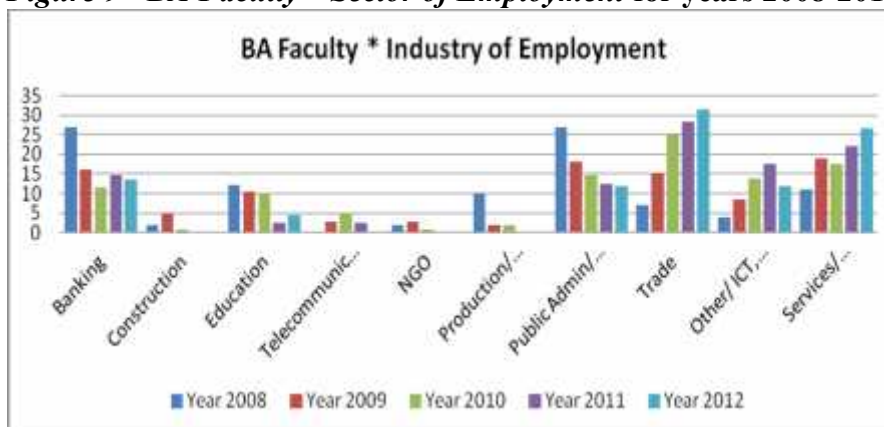
Figure 8 - Employment per Company field of Operation (Industry)



Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

In continuation, more detailed information regarding the faculty graduates employability separately across all business sector categories is provided in figure 9 below.

Figure 9 - BA Faculty * Sector of Employment for years 2008-2012



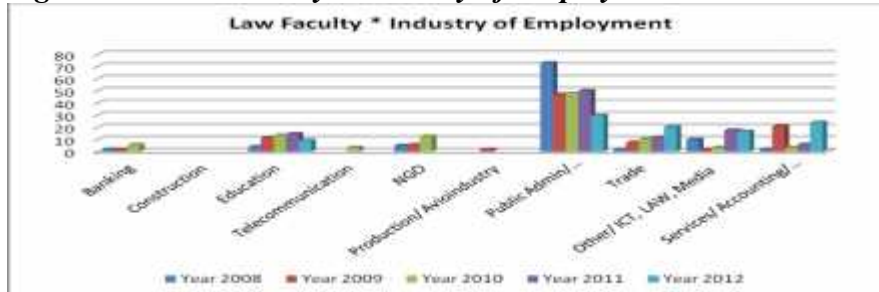
Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

Figure 9 above shows that the 26.8% of the BA faculty students found employment in the banking industry 26.8% in Public Administration, being by far the most employing industries. The third biggest employer is the private production companies with 9.9%,

followed by the consultancy industry with 7%, the latter including consulting in fields such as marketing, finance and accounting.

More than 70% of Law graduates have found employment in Public Administration, while the remaining have mostly found employment in other commercial enterprises and in higher education institutions as shown in figure 10 below:

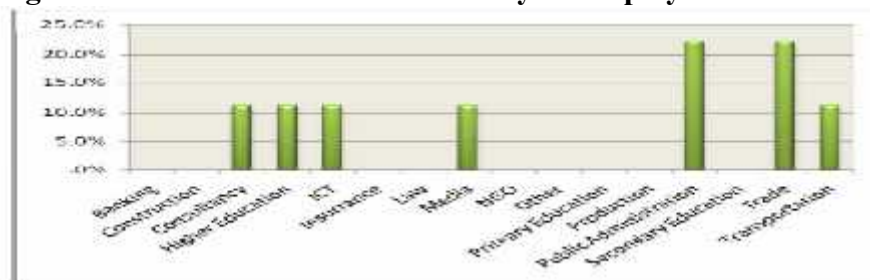
Figure 10 - Law Faculty * Industry of Employment



Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

The Communication Science graduates have mostly found employment in the public administration (22.2%) and in the trade industry (22.2%), followed by the industries: consultancy, higher education, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Media and transportation, which all interestingly score the same rate of 11.1% as shown in figure 11 below:

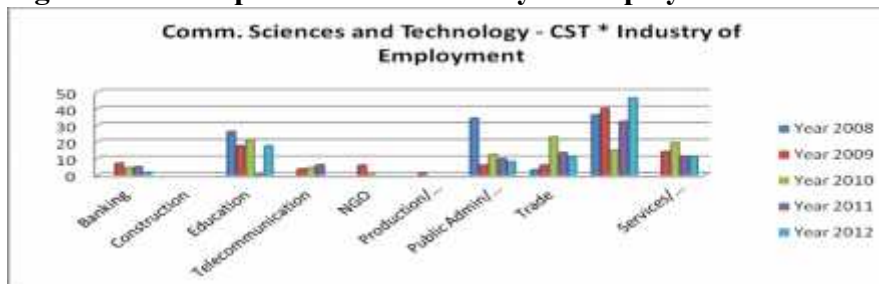
Figure 11 Comm. Sciences * Industry of Employment



Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, Prepared by: Evzal Rakipi,

The employment of computer science graduates is scattered around only a few of the included industry categories with public administration being by far the largest employer with 32.4%, followed by the ICT industry with 27% as it is shown in figure 12 below:

Figure 12 Comp. Sciences * Industry of Employment



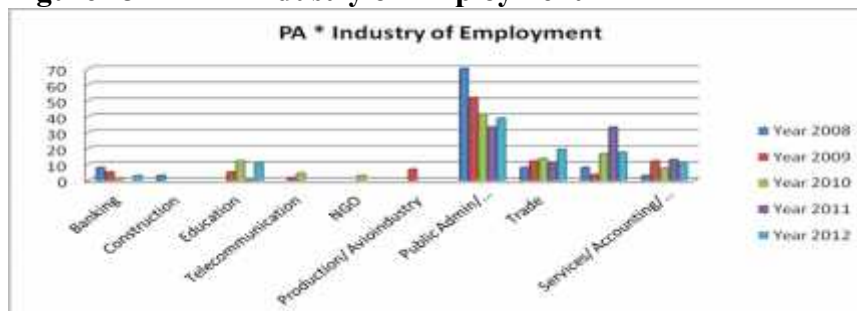
Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

As noted in the SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008 it is important to note that computer science graduates to a high extent are engaged in all three levels of the education

industry with higher education being the predominant employer in comparison with secondary and primary education (see figure 12 above).

As regards the PA faculty graduates 70% have found employment in the Public Administration, while industries such as banking, trade and “other” each employ 6.7% as shown in figure 13 below:

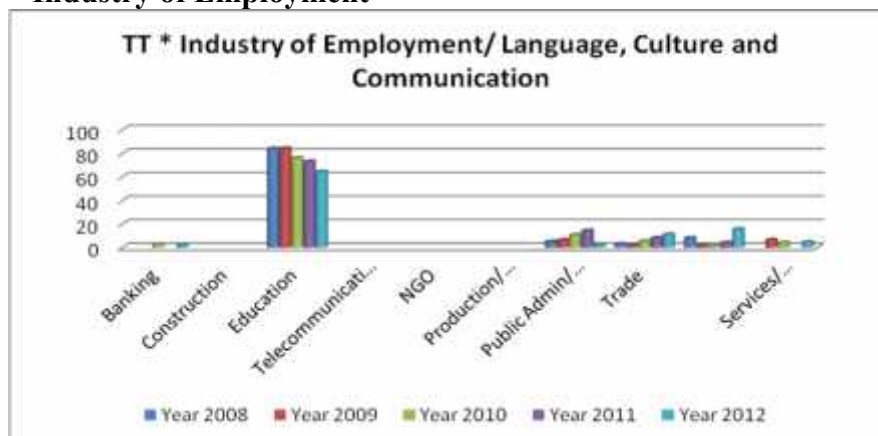
Figure 13 PA * Industry of Employment



Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

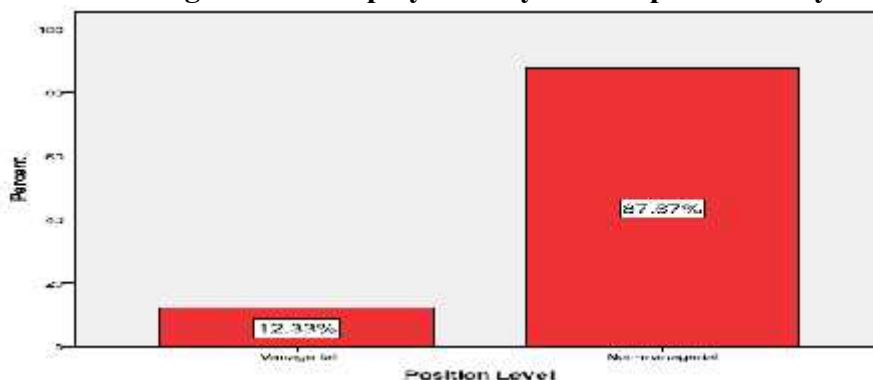
Eventually, the Teacher Training faculty/Language, Culture and Communication faculty graduates have found employment mostly in the education sector, especially in years 2008 and 2009. About 38% got employment in primary and secondary education, followed by the higher education industry with 7.1%. The category others scores in this case relatively high (7.1%), but as the report states this is due to the fact that this category includes also private training providers. It is noteworthy that only 4.8% of Teacher Training/Language, Culture and Communication faculty graduates have found employment in Public Administration, which is defined as the public sector minus the education sector (SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008) as it is shown in figure 14 below:

Figure 14 Teacher Training/ Languages Cultures and Communication Faculty * Industry of Employment



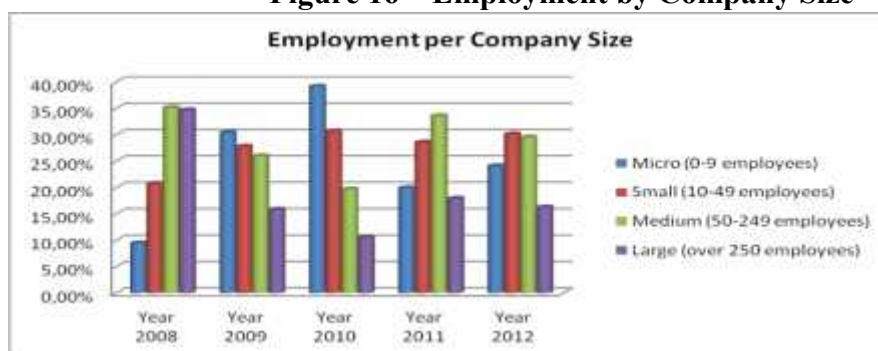
Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

Besides the information given above in figure 14, it is worth showing some information on the company size and positions as well that SEEU graduates take in the business sector. As the figure 15 below shows the majority of SEEU graduates take lower level positions in the business sector (87.67%) whereas only few take managerial positions (12.33%).

Figure 15 Employment by level of position for year 2008

Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008, Prepared by: Evzal Rakipi,

In addition, figure 16 shows that the medium and large companies are the main employer for SEEU graduates with 35.14% and 34.68% respectively. Whereas, 20.72% of the SEEU graduates have been employed in small size companies, and 9.46% in micro sized companies.

Figure 16 Employment by Company Size

Source: SEEU Alumni Destination Survey 2008-2012, adapted by R.Emini

Eventually, it is worth mentioning that there are situations when graduates come back to SEEU to ask for additional education, enrol Master studies, and/ or training. This means that SEEU graduates find contact with the SEEU very helpful and appropriate in order for them to improve their employability or effectiveness. And this kind of information is confirmed by the business sector responses to the survey in which they stated that all graduates without any exception need extra training or induction period to better match the position or better perform in the position that they work in.

As regards advising and helping SEEU graduates the Career Center office at SEEU Tetova offers its help by providing information about the companies that have requested particular expertise or graduates from a particular major or faculty. The Career Center mediates between companies and SEEU graduates.

Findings:

Based on the data analysis and the conducted interview with the Provost and Pro-Rector for Academic Affairs at SEEU Tetova the research revealed that SEE University Tetova has been trying to develop a cooperation with the business sector in Republic of Macedonia. However, the level of cooperation is very low. If it is compared to the level of

cooperation in USA, it can be seen that the cooperation in USA is very high level. For instance, Harvard, MIT, and other universities ranked higher in the World Ranking Universities list when designing their study programs or program curricula and when they try to increase the ability to build market skills for their graduates they talk directly to the top people of the business market, then corporations invest money into research in universities and universities try to produce people who are market ready the day they graduate. At SEEU Tetova this does not happen although Faculty Action Plans contain such vocabulary. That does not mean that the SEEU does not prepare graduates for the business market—it does—but the curricula is designed and created by good luck and thoughtful creation of SEEU staff with some advice from the stakeholders. But, what is most important is that the external stakeholders can provide ideas of where SEEU Tetova should go in terms of building market skills to the SEEU Tetova leadership. Especially for faculties such as Business and CST it is really important to consult the business market for the trends of where are things going and where the university leaders should focus more and this is something that it is important for the SEEU leadership to get advice from the external stakeholders. According to Professor Goodspeed SEEU Tetova produces market ready graduates, but the institutional difficulty is for SEEU Tetova to produce graduates that will meet business market needs ten years from now.

As regards the readiness and preparedness of the SEEU graduates to start jobs immediately after they are employed this research reveals that although SEEU produces market ready graduates, but they still need additional help when they start specific jobs. So, SEEU Tetova gives them the skills to be trainable for specific jobs. For example, if one student graduates from the Business informatics study program and was hired by ECOLOG or PROKREDIT BANK he or she would be required to be able to do very different things. Prokredit is banking and Ecolog is logistics, therefore SEEU Tetova graduates are very well positioned to be trained as soon as they get there, but it does require the employer to put up some specialised training so that they can start jobs once they arrive.

In terms of improving the university system of producing graduates skills to better match specific jobs in the business sector the executive team of SEEU talks a lot about this issue and so far have taken some steps in improving this system. They have undertaken some steps to make genuine contacts to external stakeholders by inviting a couple of serious corporations for each faculty that would advice SEEU in a friendly and associative manner the faculty leadership about the real needs of the business sector and determine what the real learning outcomes would be to meet their needs. A good example is the recent introduction of Integrated Study Programs that were prepared in close cooperation with some companies. However, SEEU leadership should keep contacts with its Alumni, who can help a lot by giving their feedback, since they have graduated from this university, they know SEEU curricula and they know exactly what difficulties they have faced when started a job or did it. If SEEU creates strong connections with the Alumni then it can be provided with information on where its degrees are or are not relevant or useful.

SEEU Career Center as a central office at SEEU dealing with graduates and Alumni do employability surveys, but they are not producing any documents about matching of the learning outcomes with certain positions in the business sector because in a certain sense

that's more an academic issue (applicability of the learning outcomes and the curricula to the business market is a job of the Academics and not of the Career Center).

The study programs at SEEU in general are more discipline based than competence based, although they are both but with an uneven weight towards disciplines. One of the huge shifts that can be seen in the last twenty years in the higher education is the shift towards competency based studies. According to Professor Goodspeed one can be an expert in physics and know nothing about literature and be happy, productive and useful. Unfortunately teaching at SEEU Tetova tends to be more theoretical and little on competency although SEEU studies tend to be moving towards competency based teaching system and this is what can be seen in really reputable universities. In US universities such as Indiana they don't talk about graduation but they talk about employability, specifically, can these graduates get jobs or not, and that's skills for the business market, says professor Goodspeed.

In terms of standards that would harmonize curricula throughout universities in Europe in most cases Dublin descriptors are applied. SEEU Tetova are following these descriptors since they tend to be more competency based descriptors, however, these are not mandatory nor punitive, they are just descriptors that are designed to provide guidelines, and they do not say if universities do not follow them they are not producing competent graduates. In general, they are abstract commentary how to build a competency based curricula and SEEU is generally trying to follow them.

In terms of surveying the business market for new competency based study programs or curricula for study programs the Integrated Study Programs, as mentioned above, are offered in close collaboration with Business Sector and some universities in Germany and are a good example of this kind of closer cooperation in order to have a better match of graduates to the business sector positions. The admission system to those programs is different than to the other study programs. Students do not apply to SEEU Tetova, they apply to companies so the companies choose the students that they think they can work with and decide who will take part in these programs that contain 50% theory and 50% practical work. And SEEU checks for academic merit if they meet SEEU standards as well. The companies suggest modifications and give an input to the curricula and courses that will be offered by SEEU. As for the practical part they do it in the companies such as Dauti Komerc, Ecolog, Prokredit Bank etc. Students are given grades and held accountable. Professor Norbert Marx is paid by the German government to coordinate these programs. He goes to the companies and asks for advice and sometimes their suggestions have an impact on the curricula by changing it to the companies' suggestions.

Both SEEU and business market have common interest to cooperate and both sides know and claim that this is very important for both of them, but so far they both have problem in institutionalizing their cooperation. SEEU should identify three or four companies per faculty and institutionalize the collaboration in the field of curricula design so that SEEU can produce labor force competent to do the specific jobs that those companies have in their structure. Business market on the other hand claims that they should be involved in university activities related to preparing labour force for their purposes.

Conclusions:

Based on the research conducted the following conclusions can be brought:

SEE University in Tetova does design study programs curricula and tailor courses to meet business sector requirements and the requirements of the society in Republic of Macedonia in general, however only in few cases the University management has involved directly the business sector in curricula design and course creation. As a result the business sector claims that graduates lacks practical work more and offers their services in providing practical work during undergraduate studies for at least a year.

SEE University in Tetova continuously supports its graduates in meeting their specific job requirements by offering advice and further education opportunities as well as professional development.

SEE University in Tetova continuously acts as a mediator between its graduates and the business sector in Republic of Macedonia by helping both sides to meet their specific job related needs.

SEE University graduates' skills and knowledge in most cases need development in order for the graduates to be able to do their jobs independently. In some cases it depends on the individual graduates however in general their skills and knowledge are at the medium level of the business sector requirements.

As regards the matching of the graduates' majors and jobs in the business sector in most cases the graduates find jobs that require their major, although there are cases when graduates opt to get employment in the Government or other public institutions. However, the trend of graduates getting employment in the private sector is increasing in years.

Recommendations:

Based on the conclusions from the conducted research the following recommendations can be made:

SEE University Tetova should:

1. Initiate closer cooperation with the business sector in Republic of Macedonia by organizing forums to discuss various issues related to specific study programs for specific needs of the business sector. This can contribute to institutionalizing mutual cooperation in order to give valuable contribution to the economic development of the country.
2. Continue with transferring the focus of studies from discipline to more specific skills and knowledge to meet the demands of the business sector in Republic of Macedonia.
3. Increase involvement of the business sector in designing market driven curricula and course creation at SEEU to meet specific demands of the business market and the society in general.
4. Promote common strategies of SEEU Tetova and the business sector to create new jobs for the SEEU Tetova graduates.

5. Assess the level of matching between academic profile of SEEU graduates and specific job positions in the business market to identify the gaps between the competencies required at the time of selection for a particular job and the competencies acquired by the graduates. This would also help in identifying what actions need to be taken to adjust the system of curricula design and course creation within SEEU Tetova to meet the demand of the business sector in Republic of Macedonia.

References:

- Emini Rashit. (2010), Financial Management in SEEU . Alfa-94 Skopje, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, 9 / 2010. ISBN 978-608-65201-0-6. October, 2010
- Leoni Riccardo. (2011), Employability of graduates and development of competencies: mind the gap and mind the step! Empirical evidence for Italy August 2011
- Leuven Edwin & Hessel Oosterbeek (2011), Overeducation and Mismatch in the Labor Market, IZA DP No. 5523, February 2011
- Robst John, (2006), Education and job match: The relatedness of college major and work, Economics of Education Review 26 (2007) 397–407, Department of Mental Health Law and Policy, Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida, 13301 Bruce B Downs Blvd, Tampa, FL 33612, USA, Received 3 February 2006; accepted 7 August 2006
- Robst, John (2007), 'Education and Job Match: The Relatedness of College Major and Work', Economics of Education Review, 26, 397-407
- R.K.W. van der Velden and M.S.M. van Smoorenburg, (1997), The Measurement of Overeducation and Undereducation: Self-Report vs. Job-Analyst Method ROA-RM-1997/2E, Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market Faculty of Economics and Business Administration Maastricht University Maastricht, December 1997
- The State of European University-Business Cooperation Part of the DG Education and Culture Study on the Cooperation between Higher Education Institutions and Public and Private Organisations in Europe May 17, 2010 to August 31, 2011 Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre Münster University of Applied Sciences, Germany, 31st August, 2011 http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/uni-business-cooperation_en.pdf, page 25)