

provides the first workplace for graduates i.e. guarantees them employment. The second factor, individual interests and the media, stimulates expectations of a high quality of life and a well-paid job from the beginning of their employment.

According to previous research, some students agree to take the state job assignment, either following traditional work values or not being able to avoid a state workplace. We selected three groups of students. The first group are those enrolled in studies on the recommendations of state enterprises and institutions and receive scholarships from them. In accordance with the law, such specialists must work for five years. The second group are those whose study is state funded and who are obliged to work in the state job assignment for two years. The third group are those who pay for their study but can ask for a state assignment, if they do not want to, or cannot find a job.

#### How to Avoid a State Work Assignment

Most state-funded students try to avoid the state assigned workplace because they want to find a job on their own. They use several strategies for this. A popular strategy is to find a job themselves and provide an official request from this organization for their placement. This request is welcomed by the leadership of universities, if it is sent from government organizations that correspond to the student's profession. It also requires a guarantee from this organization that the graduate will work for two years. Employers do not appreciate this mechanism because they have to provide benefits to the young professionals. During the last few years students have been allowed to work in the private sector if the job corresponds to the student's area of study. Students have to find a potential employer and be employed there before they graduate, which means the students need to work in parallel to their studies. Otherwise it will be difficult to demonstrate their professional qualities and competences for the future employer who usually need young workers with some experience.

According to research data, around one third of the students in Belarus have a job. The question is whether these students differ from the rest in their value orientations, gender, or area of studies (technical, natural science and social).

#### National Case Study

We have been researching student value orientations, including labor attitudes, for several years [1]. However, only in 2016 did our survey include the questions necessary for analysing student motivation for employment during their study, their expectations regarding their future work and the qualities that will be in demand in the workplace. The national sample included ten universities that represent three major areas of study (technical, natural science and social). The proportion of males and females corresponded to the national division of students. The initial sample consisted of more than 450 students; for our analysis of students' attitudes to their future work, we selected only 3rd and 4th year students who are concerned about their future employment. Our final sample included 275 students.

Our study revealed that 40% of senior students are not looking for a job, 30% are combining study and work, another 30% are looking for work. A student's labor status is not statistically related to the course of study, gender or area of study. Differences between groups in academic achievements are also not statistically significant. The major difference between those who have a job and those who do not is the conditions of study (state-funded or private). Motivations to work include the desire to find a good workplace (and avoid the state job assignment) and to get work experience. Some students mentioned the need to earn money for living expenses.

There are no differences in work expectations between those who are already employed and those who are not: 67% of those who are already working and 60% of those who are not looking for work said that they want to work in their specialty. These results are in line with the nationwide survey of Belarusian youth about workplace criteria.

#### Conclusion

The state job assignment cannot prevent students from looking for employment in accordance with their interests and education and which pays high salaries. Instead, it stimulates students to work and study in parallel. Students who are already working (about 30%) rely on themselves for finding employment. Therefore, student employment is the best strategy for bypassing the state work assignment and a way to gain work experience.

#### Notes

[1] The data are in the archive of the Department of Sociology, Belarusian State University

## Student work, competencies and employment: a case study of Slovenia

**Marko Ruperčič**

*Expert on Student work: Slovenian Student Union (Slovenia)*

[marko.rupercic@studentska.org.si](mailto:marko.rupercic@studentska.org.si)

#### Student work and controversies

The employment status of Slovenian students during the academic year is diverse: they either do not work (42%), engage in full-time employment (7%), engage in other contractual employments (5%), or engage in student work (46%) [1]. The latter is temporary or occasional work, flexible enough to be combined with the study calendar and

limited only to students enrolled in secondary and tertiary education. In contrast to other types of work in Slovenia, student work is paid by the hour, and provided by student work agencies, which ensures some level of security. It is, therefore, widespread; approximately 60% of Slovenian students do at least one hour of student work per year (with the average being 8.3 hours per week). Student work represents about 3% of the national labour market in work hours, and is the focus of this article.

A number of papers present student work as mainly low paid, menial, precarious work in sectors with low added value. Šušteršič [2] offers an overview of the student work market and divides it into manual labour (22%), other non-complex labour (50%), and complex professional labour (28%). He claims that student work shares segments of the labour market with unqualified workers and young graduates, and further advocates that student work as such cannot provide the competencies needed for improving the employability of students.

However, it has been proven that student work plays a great role in graduate employability. It represents a stepping stone, as more than 50% of working students find full time employment after graduation with the same employer for whom they worked as students [3]. When compared to non-working students, students who combine study and work find more stable and better paid employment after graduation [4].

Regretfully, since definitive data is insufficient, only estimated statistics are available. These estimates show that about 35% of students doing student work are employed as service and sales workers (ISCO 5), and about 20% as clerical support workers (ISCO 4), 15% of students work either as technicians and associate professionals (ISCO 3) or elementary workers (ISCO 9). These categories include work in food and drink services and administration, where around 20% of students find employment in each of the sub-categories respectively. These types of work generally do not complement the study programme and simply cannot improve graduate employability to the degree shown by Bartolj. Bridging the gap between these seemingly contradictory results was the topic of the research on competencies gained through student work [5].

## Student work and competencies

Researchers have divided the student labour market into 19 categories and 99 subcategories of work, with students and employers estimating the development of key transversal competencies by engaging in different fields of student work. With further measurement and taking into consideration expected and actual competencies of graduates, an estimation of the development of such competencies in formal higher education was made.

The decision to focus on transversal competencies was deliberate. Since the majority of students work in fields not directly linked to their educational programme, the development of other competencies needed in the labour market is crucial.

Practical education (internships, traineeships, or other work placements) contributed the most to the development of competencies, followed by formal higher education and student work. Since practical education is almost non-existent in university education (in which 60% of Slovenian post-secondary students are enrolled), the importance of formal education and student work is highlighted.

When comparing data on the actual competencies of graduates and the degree of the development of these competencies through student work, we concluded that formal higher education is still more important in developing competencies than student work. Competencies such as communication in a foreign language, written communication, IT literacy, searching for and interpreting information, mathematical literacy, and analytical thinking and problem solving are developed more in formal education. However, competencies such as expert behaviour, adaptability, manual skills, teamwork and cooperation, and customer orientation are developed more through student work.

Employers expect team work and cooperation, adaptability, oral communication, and IT literacy to be the competencies graduates should have developed most before entering the labour market.

Competencies which are developed the most by student work are team work and cooperation, adaptability, oral communication, and customer orientation.

These competencies are obviously not developed equally in different types of student work. Working in the fields of education, sports, organizational and project work, and food and drink services help develop the most important competencies in the labour market.

It is also important to understand that there are different degrees of professionalism in different study programmes. Based on Eurostudent VI [6] data, studying natural sciences, ICT, agriculture, and health and welfare takes on average more than 40 hours per week, while these students work on average 10 hours per week. This results in a more direct career path, starting with enrolment in a study programme. Students studying social sciences, business, and services need around 30 hours per week for studying and subsequently work around 20 hours per week, which makes student work more important in developing competencies and career paths.

## Conclusion

Considering, on the one hand, the intensity of study in different study programmes and the competencies developed in formal education and, on the other, student work, tertiary education needs to be understood in a broader perspective when exploring graduate employability. This includes the students' commitment to achieve the needed ECTS points as well as creating opportunities to develop competencies outside higher education institutions. Graduate employability does not depend only on knowledge and skills gained within the study programme, but also competencies developed through voluntary or paid work,

hobbies, interests, non-formal education, etc. Even if not directly complementary to the study programme, these activities are complementary to any formal education when thinking in terms of employability, career orientation and career building.

## References

- [1] Gril, A., Bijuklič, I., Autor, S. (2018). Evroštudent VI Socialni in ekonomski pogoji življenja študentov v Evropi 2016-2018 [PDF]. Ljubljana: Pedagoški inštitut.
- [2] Šušteršič, J., Nastav, B. & Kosi, T. (2010). Ekonomski vidiki študentskega dela. Koper: Fakulteta za management.
- [3] K, Šp., & STA. (2010). Študentsko delo pozitivno vpliva na iskanje prve zaposlitve. Delo. Retrieved from <https://www.delo.si>.
- [4] Bartolj, T., Polanec, S. (2015). Economics of tertiary education: Analysis of students decisions and outcomes: Doctoral dissertation. Ljubljana: T. Bartolj.
- [5] Ruperčič, M., Hren J., & Kohont, A. (2018). Razvoj kompetenc, pridobljenih s študentskim delom. Teorija in praksa, 55(2), 263-280.
- [6] EUROSTUDENT VI Database (Data Reporting Module). (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://database.eurostudent.eu/>

## Drivers of Student Employment in Kazakhstan

**Dilrabo Jonbekova**

*Assistant Professor: Graduate School of Education,  
Nazarbayev University (Kazakhstan)*  
[dilrabo.jonbekova@nu.edu.kz](mailto:dilrabo.jonbekova@nu.edu.kz)

Socio-economic factors, structural issues within job markets and changing modes of education have been key drivers for combining work and study over the past few decades. Similar to global trends, Kazakhstan continues to experience growth in university student employment. While official statistics are unavailable, a survey of 4,000 students by HeadHunter Group in 2013, showed that 67% of Kazakh students were employed while studying at university [1]. In 2016, 163,000 students registered for part-time employment on HeadHunter – the most prominent job search website in Kazakhstan. Research is required to better understand the impact of this trend on educational outcomes and distributional impacts, particularly for women and households in rural communities.

## Drivers of student employment

Four factors are driving growth in student employment in Kazakhstan: (1) increasing tuition fees, (2) competition in the job market (3) the introduction of distance education and blended learning programs and (4) an increase in part-time job availability.

### Increasing tuitions fees

While the government continues to offer state scholarships, 70% of students pay tuition fees. Increases in tuition fees has led to inequalities in access to education, particularly for rural households who cannot afford university fees for their children unless without the contribution of a state grant. In 2019, 142,400 students at Kazakhstani universities did not complete their degree requirements, and for 20% of them it was due to financial difficulties [2]. The rapid increase in tuition fees has forced students to take on part-time employment to support their parents and ease the burden of financial constraints.

### Competition in the job market

Fierce competition for jobs is creating tremendous pressure on students, placing greater emphasis on their knowledge and skill development, and in differentiating themselves from others in the job market. Combined work and study has been a key avenue for many students to acquire the skills and attributes required in the job market. With significant investments made in education through various initiatives [3], over the last three decades, the pool of talented graduates has been increasing and leading to an oversupply of university graduates—leaving some graduates unemployed and others in jobs not related to their skills or educational background. The mismatch between the supply and demand of graduates has resulted in a situation where employers are raising the bar for jobs that decades ago did not require higher education. To ease the hiring process, employers often prioritise candidates with work experience relative to someone possessing only university credentials [4, 5]. Work experience is increasingly valued and this is one way through which recent graduates can differentiate themselves from others. Therefore, students start seeking employment at an undergraduate level to learn practical skills, gain experience, and to develop a professional network. Hence, those students who integrate work and studies have better employment opportunities [5].

### Distance education

The expansion of distance and blended-learning degrees, and access to the internet has been another driver of students combining work and study. Distance education and blended-learning programs have made education more affordable and accessible, particularly for individuals who are unable to enroll in full-time programs because of an inability to cover the cost of full-time university education or the need to earn money to support a family. Such programs have enabled students to pursue university education without quitting their jobs. These programs have made education more accessible for students with special