

## Student's Internship and the Labor Market – The Case of the University of Prishtina

Arlinda Beka, PhD Student\*  
MSc. Elmedina Nikoçeviq\*\*

\* Faculty of Education; Career Development Centre- University of Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo

\*\*Career Development Centre- University of Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo

Email: [arlinda.beka@uni-pr.edu](mailto:arlinda.beka@uni-pr.edu), [arlinda.beka@gmail.com](mailto:arlinda.beka@gmail.com) [elmedinan@gmail.com](mailto:elmedinan@gmail.com)

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**Abstract** The University of Prishtina until recently was the only public university in Kosovo. With a total of 17 faculties of various field and around 50 thousand students, it is one of the biggest universities in the region. Because of the large number of students, one of the main problems faced by its faculties is providing internships for students. This paperwork deals with the analysis of the integration of internship into curriculum's of the three faculties: Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Faculty of Education. The paperwork will identify types of internships that these faculties offer as well as their readiness to provide internships for all students. It also presents the analysis of the students' needs for internship, importance of internship to improve students' employability skills and the difficulties they face in finding an internship. The study uses survey data generated from 300 students of third year students from the Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Faculty of Education and from administration of these three faculties. The findings of the research have shown the difficulties that economics and electrical - computer engineering students have in finding an internship because their faculties don't provide it for them whereas it's difficult to find it alone. But, Faculty of Education has better organised internship programs.

**Keywords:** Internship, Students, Faculties, Curriculum

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### Introduction

Higher Education is crucial important in the life of youth. Its importance relies not only in the theoretical preparation and knowledge gaining but also in the developing and building their professional competences in order to make them better prepared for the labor market. One of the main goals of higher education (HE) is to prepare students for a future career (Santiago, 2009). Successful design and implementation of the internship program requires the cooperative efforts of two key personnel: a faculty instructor/coordinator and an agency internship coordinator. ((Etkins, 2002)

Youth's education consists in their professional preparation which they gain in pre university education and in the higher education. Internship is considered a crucial part of studies for every young man and woman. This strengthens even more their professionalism and makes them more competent in a given fields. Internships are not important to students only. Internships are important to University and to the Labor market. Interaction between the University and Labor market should be closed and tight one. They should be partners that assist and supplement one-another in developing and improving quality of work in preparing the youth for the labor market. Through the feedback received from interns and organizational supervisors, curriculum development can be enhanced as faculty examine the degree to which what is being taught in the classroom matches what is expected professionally of students in the actual work situation (Blasé & Fixsen, 1981; McCaffery, 1979). Professional preparation of the youth should be done in interaction with the labor market demands. University must follow carefully trends and the needs of economic development. In the same direction of development faculties should invest in students in order so they can gain all the necessary skills and knowledge needed for job. For this purpose the curriculums in the University should be prepared based upon the labor market needs. Perhaps they should be prepared in a joint cooperation between University and the Labour market. In this way both factors would compliment one another like fitting a puzzle which can be clearly viewed only after is complete. In this way the cooperation between University and the Labor market can provide a better professional fulfillment.

In one way the University will prepare students towards the labor market needs and on the other hand the labor market will involve them as interns during their studies by which they can improve their knowledge, experience and professionalism. If they are succesful during their internship period they can become potential employers when they graduate.

This would satisfy both sides and would ensure that students that are going through their studies gain theoretical and practical knowledge and experience for their brighter future.

Being competent is neccesity in current trends of profeessional development. This determines the level of

professional development for each individual. Those competences the youth mostly gain during their studies when they need to make a connection between the theory and practical work or internship. Taylor (1988) hypothesizes that internships mediate the difficult transition between school and work in at least three ways: (a) facilitating crystallization of vocational self-concept and work values, (b) decreasing the reality shock of the first job, and (c) providing students with better employment opportunities.

### **Background of the study**

University of Prishtina is the largest public University. It consists of 17 faculties and has around 50.000 active students in all levels of studies. Within the University of Prishtina functions Career Development Centre aiming to prepare students for internships, practical work engagement during their studies or future employment possibilities and serves as a liaison between students and labor market. CDC also helps the University of Prishtina's Alumni's by providing additional trainings in order to help them increase the chances of employment.

University of Prishtina has no strategy or a administrative regulation which makes the internship at different, companies and/or organisations as a mandatory for each student. Therefore University through its Career Development Center, attempts to help students in terms of finding internships. CDC has initiated several MOU agreements with different public or private institutions, international or domestic to help students getting internship possibilities and develop their professional career.

### **Methodology**

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to provide information about the presence and challenges of internship programs for students at three faculties of the University of Prishtina: the Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Faculty of Education. Another purpose of this paper is to identify and present the problems that students' face, their difficulties in finding an internship and to emphasize the importance of internship in bringing students and the labour market in a closer and supplementing to one and other.

#### **General Background of Research**

The survey was conducted during the first semester of school year 2011/2012. To analyse the integration of internship into faculty curriculum's we chosen three largest faculties in University of Prishtina: Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Faculty of Education.

The main **hypotheses** upon which the research was built were:

H1: Internship is not integrated into curriculums of all UP faculties.

H2: Due to the lack of specific program of the internship in UP, students are required to ensure internship by themselves or through a third party outside the faculty.

H3: Students that haven't finished any internship think that they will be employed more slowly than those who finished an internship.

#### **Sample of Research**

The survey was conducted on a sample of 300 participants, 100 students of Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering, 100 students of Faculty of Economics and 100 students of Faculty of Education. In each faculty, questionnaires were distributed to students of four departments. Twenty five students in each department fulfilled the questionnaire. All respondents are students of third year. Also, the questionnaires were distributed to three administrators of these three faculties.

#### **Instrument and Procedures**

Qualitative method is used for collecting the data. Questionnaire for the administrators and students, done by the

researchers, has open and closed questions. Research was conducted by means of an anonymous questionnaire. The student questionnaire consists of 16 questions. This questionnaire included 5 open and 11 closed questions, while the questionnaire for administrators included 10 questions, 4 open and 6 closed questions.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used in order to analyze the data collected. The descriptive statistics includes the use of frequency tables, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

### Results of Research

Since, for each faculty is surveyed 100 students, the number frequency is same with percentage of respondents. Initially, respondents were asked what kind of internships their faculty offers for them. Most of the FE (Faculty of Education) students (84%), 40% of electrical and computer engineering students and only 2% of economics students indicated that in their faculty internship is obligatory and it must be performed in institutions determined by faculty. The majority of the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering (FECE) students (45%) stated that the internship is obligatory but they have to ensure it by themselves, while the same answers have given 13% of FE students and 6% of economics students. Seventy-eight percent of economics students affirmed that the internship is not obligatory in their faculty and that students find internships by their own initiative, while also 11% of FE students and 2% of FECE students have given the same answer. Only 3% of FECE students, 5% of economics students and 1% of FE students answered that their faculty offers case studies, while only 1% of FECE students and 3% of economics students stated that their faculty offers company visits. Six percent of economics students answered that their faculty don't offers any of the mentioned types of internships. The surveyed administrator of FECE and administrator of Faculty of Education answered that internship is obligatory and it must be performed in institutions determined by their faculty, while the surveyed administrator of Faculty of Economics answered that internship is not obligatory in their faculty and that students find internships by their own initiative.

**Figure 1: Numbers/percentages of respondents by answer given to this question "Is internship integrated in your faculty curriculum?"**

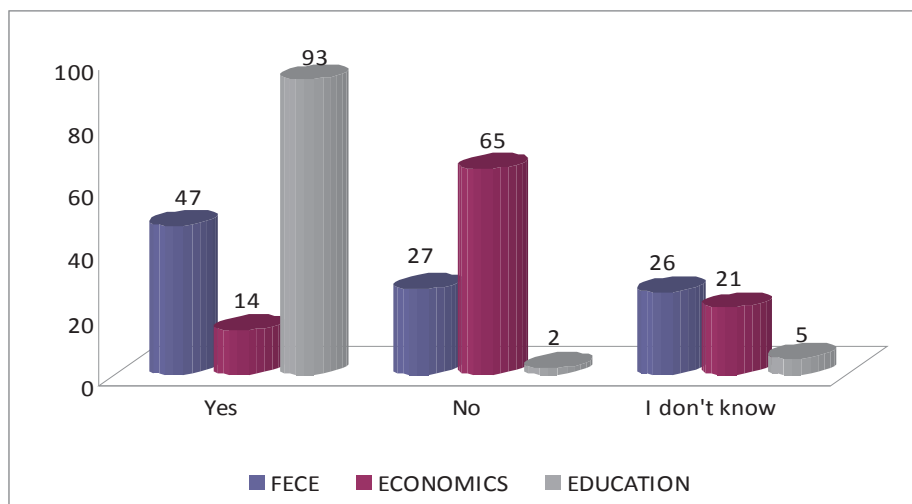


Figure 1 presents the results concerning the question if internship is integrated in the faculty curriculum. As can be seen on this figure, most of the FE students (93%) and FECE students (47%) answered that internship is integrated in their faculty curriculum, while the majority of economics students (65%) answered that internship isn't integrated in curriculum of their faculty. Twenty-six percent of FECE students, 21% of economics students and 5% of FE students answered that they don't know if internship is integrated or not. The surveyed administrator of FECE and administrator of FE answered that internship is integrated in their faculty curriculum, while the surveyed administrator of Faculty of Economics answered that in their faculty it isn't.

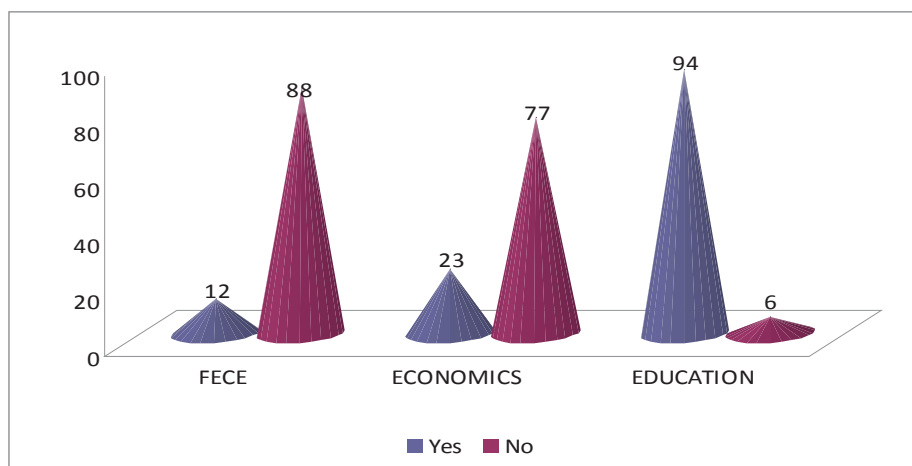
Regarding time frame of internships, most of the FECE students answered that internships last 8 weeks, most of the

economics students (93%) haven't answered to this question while most of the FE students (64%) stated that internship lasts 6 weeks. The FECE administrator answered that an internship lasts 2 weeks, while most of their students say 8 weeks. The Faculty of Education administrator answered that an internship lasts 6 weeks per year. The Faculty of Economics administrator hasn't answered to this question because the internship isn't obligatory in this faculty.

On the fourth question how many ECTS credits they receive for internship, most of the FECE students (76%) answered that they receive 6 credits for internship, 84% of FE students and all of economics students answered that they don't know.

As can be seen on Figure 2, 88% of FECE students and 77% of economics students haven't done any practical work even they are on third year of study, while most of the FE students have done (94%).

**Figure 2: Numbers/percentages of respondents by answer given to this question "Have you done any internship?"**



Surveyed students were also asked if they prepare any report after the internship. Most of the FE students (80%) and FECE students (69%) answered that they prepare a report after the internship, while most of economics students (87%) answered that they don't. Also, the surveyed administrator of FECE and administrator Faculty of Education answered that students prepare a report after finishing the internship, while the surveyed administrator of Faculty of Economics answered "no" on this question.

On the question regarding how much practical work had contributed to students' professional development; answer is given only by students that have finished the internship (12% of FECE students, 23% of economics students and 94% of FE students). However, most of the FE students say that practical work has contributed to their professional development a lot (79%), a little (13%) and not at all (2%). Eight (from 12 FECE students that have finished the internship) and nineteen economics students (from 23 that have finished the internship) say that practical work has contributed a lot to their professional development, while 4 FECE students and 3 economics students chose the option "a little".

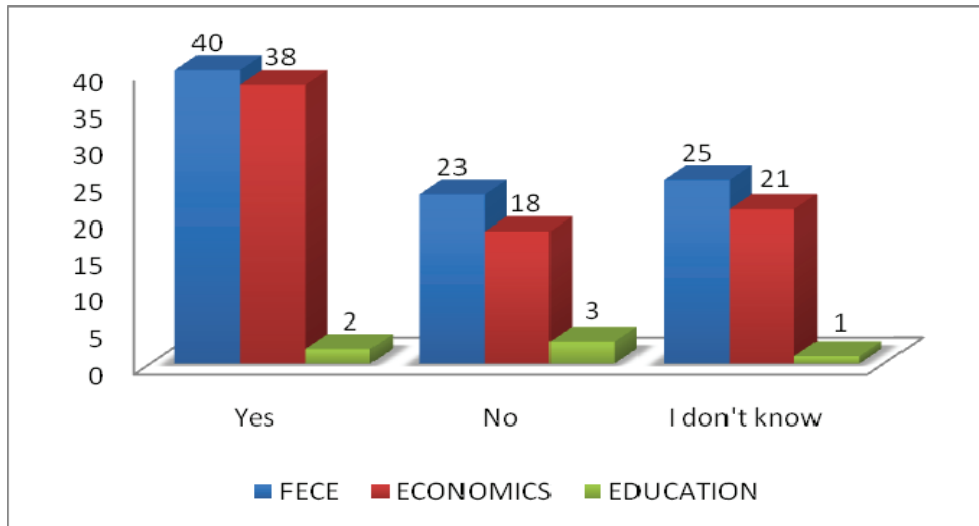
Students that have finished the internship were asked if they think that they will be employed more quickly than those without practical experience. Most of the FE students (45%) think that yes, 20% answered "no", while 29% stated that they don't know. Eight (from 12 FECE students that have finished the internship) answered "yes" to a question, one answered no while three students answered that they don't know. Ten economics students (from 23 that have finished the internship) answered "yes" to a question, 2 students answered "no" while 11 students say that they don't know.

Students that haven't finished any practical work where asked why did it happen. Forty-nine economics students (from 77 students that haven't finished any internship), 26 FECE students (from 88 students) and 3 FE students (from 6 students) answered that they haven't finished yet any internship because it was hard to find it alone. Thirteen FECE students and ten economics students say they didn't finish internship yet due to high criteria of companies. Most of FECE students that haven't finish any internship (44 students) say that it happen because internship haven't been required yet by the faculty. The same answer is given by 6 economics students and one FE student. Five FECE students, 12 economics students and 2 FE students answered "I don't know" on this question.

When they were asked if they will be employed more slowly than those who have done an internship, 40 FECE

students (from 88 students that haven't done any internship) and 38 economics students ( from 77 students) answered "Yes" on a question, while 23 FECE students and 18 economics students answered "No". Twenty-five percent FECE students and 21 economics students say that they don't know. (See Figure 3)

**Figure 3: Numbers/percentages of respondents by answer given to this question "Do you think that you will be employed more slowly than those without practical experience?"**



The results revealed that most of FECE students (83%) answered that they have to do internship on 6<sup>th</sup> semester, 10 students don't know in which semester, while 7 students haven't answered to this question. The majority of economics students (56%) answered they don't have to do internship on none of semesters, 24% say they have to do the internship on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semester, 11% say on 4<sup>th</sup> semester while 9% say on 3<sup>rd</sup> semester; three students answered that they don't know. Most of the FE students (87%) answered they do internship on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year of study, 9% say they do internship every year while 4% didn't answer on question. The surveyed administrator of FECE answered that students have to do internship on 6<sup>th</sup> semester; the Faculty of Education administrator answered that internship must be done on 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> semester while the administrator of Faculty of Economics stated that even internship isn't obligatory it is recommended to do it on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> semester.

According to the findings, FECE and Faculty of Education have an internship coordinator, while Faculty of Economics doesn't have. Ninety-five percent of FE students and 48% of FECE students answered that their faculty has an internship coordinator, while 48% of economics students and 27% of FECE students answered "no" on this question. Forty-five percent of economics students and 18% of FECE students answered they don't know if in their faculty exists an internship coordinator. The surveyed administrator of FECE and Faculty of Education answered that in their faculty exists an internship coordinator, while the surveyed administrator of Faculty of Economics answered that in their faculty don't exist.

On the question if their faculties offer any additional activity outside the curriculum that can help students professional development, the majority of all students surveyed answered "No" on this question; Sixty-nine percent of FECE students, 53% of economics student's and 59% of FE students think so. The Faculty of Education administrator answered that this faculty don't offer any additional activity; the FECE administrator haven't answered to this question while the Faculty of Economics administrator answered that this faculty organize some additional activities as company visits and presentation of some banks to their students.

Most of students which stated that their faculty offer additional activities outside the curriculum (13% of FECE students, 15% economics students and 15% FE students), say that faculty organize conferences and fairs, but also seminars, training and courses with payment.

### Summary of Results (Findings)

- Internship is obligatory in FECE and FE, while it isn't in Faculty of Economics.
- Internship is integrated in curriculum of Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Faculty of Education while it isn't integrated in curriculum of Faculty of Economics.
- According to most FECE students, they have to find an internship by themselves while the administrator of this faculty say that their faculty provide internship for students; FE students and administrator answered that the internship must be performed in institutions determined by faculty while according to economics students and their administrator they find internships by their own initiative.
- Most of FECE students and economics students haven't done yet any practical work, while most of FE students have finish an internship.
- Most of students that have finished an internship say that it had contributed a lot to their professional development.
- Most of students that have finished an internship think that they will be employed more quickly than those without practical experience.
- While, most of students that haven't finished an internship think they will be employed more slowly than those with practical experience.
- Most of students of the Faculty of Economics say that they haven't finish any internship because it was hard to find it alone; most of FECE students answered that they haven't done any internship because it haven't been required yet by the faculty.
- According to most respondents, faculties don't offer additional activities outside the curriculum that can help student's professional development.

### Discussions

Employers have complained that higher education programs often fail to respond to one of their most basic needs: providing students with skills necessary to function effectively in a business environment (Fitt & Heverly, 1992). The student's education should end with a capstone experience to integrate knowledge, behaviors, and professional attitudes acquired throughout the curriculum that are necessary to the practice of health information administration (CAAHEP, 2003). One response from universities has been to develop internship programs designed to provide experiences more closely tied to potential work settings (Gabris & Mitchell, 1989). Several studies have indicated and concluded that really exists a gap between the quality of graduates produced and what the market demands. According to the researchers, internships enhance the classroom course material understanding; encourage the students' learning; and improve their problem solving abilities. According to career portal Vault.com, Fortune 500 companies may end up spending three times as much per new hire by recruiting through advertising and visiting universities versus recruiting interns (Leung, 2002).

### Conclusions

One commonly heard criticism of University of Prishtina is that graduates are not well prepared for the job market. This institution must consider the integration of students into a labor market a priority. The main activity of UP must be the placement of students in a context of a curriculum internship, professional internship and/or employment. As we have presented through the research results it is obvious that Faculty of Education stands better in terms of internship. This is due to the fact that they have an organized internship from their faculty and its and mandatory during their 4<sup>th</sup> year studies and is counted with ECTS credits. Through organizing this kind of internship Faculty of Education manages to prepare its students for employment immediately after graduation.

As of the Faculty of Electronic and Computer Engineering we noticed that they tried to make the internship a mandatory part of studies but only in the last year of studies (3<sup>rd</sup>). It's important to state here that even though the FECE has made internship as a mandatory for students of the last year of studies, the Faculty does not organize internships but students have to find an internship opportunity on their own. In the end the Faculty decides whether to include the internship in the ECTS credit value of studies or not. Also the students of the first two years of studies are completely excluded from the internship possibilities.

Unfortunately the worst situation is with the Faculty of Economics where internship is not a mandatory part of studies and even student initiated internship is not counted. This means that if a student has found a place to do his internship in the end of internship the Faculty will not take this into account or to value with ECTS credits. This has raise a discontent

and de motivation for all students and therefore they consider the internship as not needed for their labor market preparation. After the comparison of the research results of the three Faculties it was proved that the students of the Faculty of Economics are less prepared for the labor market. This certainly reflects on the country's economic development.

### Recommendation

- University of Prishtina should make internship as a mandatory part of studies for each student at every Faculty.
- University of Prishtina must sign more MOU agreements for internship with different companies.
- Each Faculty should motivate its students for internship and should try to find internship possibilities for them
- Faculties should take into account student involvement in internship and value it with the ECTS credits.
- University of Prishtina should consider labor market a close and inevitable partner and to exchange as much as information of the labor market demands and improve its quality of studies toward it.
- We suggest more roundtables between UP and companies regarding building up network for internship.
- Faculty of Economics must create a concrete strategy for providing internships for students.
- Practical work must be added as compulsory in the curriculum of the Faculty of Economics.
- UP must begin a campaign for awareness of companies about the importance and mutual benefit by providing practical work for students.
- Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering must offer practical work also in the second year, not only at the end of the study.
- Faculty of Economics and Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering should offer more company visits for groups of 4-5 students and let them make a case study there.
- Faculty of Economics and Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering should organize company visits as external observers to gain experience from observation.

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