



ISSN 1855-931X

POLICY EFFECTIVENESS FOR EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN ALBANIA

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Abstract

This study aims to provide an overview of legislation and employment policies for young people in Albania, mainly for those who have completed professional education studies. The effectiveness of these policies will be attached special priority in our study. By this work we intend to answer questions such as: How really effective are the employment policies for young people? Which are the factors influencing the effective implementation or not of these policies? Which are the consequences of unemployment of young people with professional education?

Different statistics and data collected from public or private institutions on professional education and employment opportunities for young people will be analyzed in this study. The entire study will be subject to review of literature sources and critical analysis. It aims to promote the awareness of local policy-makers to draft social policies on the labor market, mainly for the employment of young people with professional education, which should be implemented in the context of current state of affairs of Albania, as well as the sensibilization of young people in term of professional education under market requirements.

The study will certainly continue with some conclusions to be introduced at the end, associated with key recommendations from the authors, in order to better address the employment policies for young people oriented to real market demands in Albania.

Keywords: effectiveness, employment, employment policies, professional education, young people

JEL Classification: M51, M50, J20

INTRODUCTION

In each country of the world the young people are a vital part of the population. They are the ones who often promote political and social changes. During the period of transition the Albanian youth was that part of population which was mostly affected from poor policies of employment and education, due to negligence and poverty. As a consequence to the foregoing, most of the young population immigrated to more developed countries to build a life with ampler opportunities and options. During recent years, a higher priority is attached to the employment of young people in Albania. The challenges encountered by the young people to enter and remain in the labor market have become too complex and a large number of young people in Albania work under conditions of informal economy.

Notwithstanding the actions undertaken during 2008-2011 in respect of professional education of the young people, Albania still experiences hardships for the development of professional education and above all, for the employment of young people who follow and complete professional education. If we had a look at schools offering high professional education or the ones offering 6-month or 1-year professional courses, we would observe improper working conditions and basically a poor infrastructure.

As referred to in the Sectorial Employment Strategy (2007-2013, p.34) "there is a wide range of issues associated with professional schools not only in terms of infrastructure but also in the context of infrastructure, financial matters, academic staff, human resources etc. The above components are not adequate to cover successfully and effectively the services they provide". Therefore, being out of the standards required for the professional education renders the confrontation with the labor market a major and hard challenge.

The professional education in Albania is not uniformly distributed and is not based on a study about the domestic market needs or requirements. The Statistics Institute, INSTAT, "observed that most of Albanian population lives in rural areas, therefore it remains an agricultural-breedstocking country although during the last ten years", according to the recent data published by INSTAT, the visual and print media have publicized a movement of the population from rural to urban areas, "again, we remain a country with vast population in rural areas". In these circumstances, the development of professional education in this area must be a priority for the professional education policies.

The transformation of the Albanian economy during the last two decades has clearly warranted the need for professional qualifications, where the most required are the ones on agriculture, breedstocking, plumbing, technology, mechanics etc.

Besides the fact that the labor market requires such professionals, on the other hand, the "integration in Europe poses similar needs for development and broader involvement of the professional education of young people" (National Strategy for Development and Education, 2011, p. 64).

All of the above factors cause hardships for the employment of young people who have completed professional education. Probably, this is the reason why during the last years the young people in Albania are prone to attend University studies, with the potential hope of additional employment opportunities but without taking into consideration the quality of education they follow or without being aware of their potential for this type of selected education.

In Albania, the tendency of young people for higher education has become a "trend". "Education and higher studies attended by the young people are rarely balanced with the academic potentials, skills of young persons or employment opportunities caused by the attendance of higher studies in a certain profile" (Ministry of Education and Science, 2008, p.13). Having a "bachelor" diploma in International Relations, Law, Psychology or other diplomas seems to be more important than their academic and professional value in a near future.

All these educational issues in general, either of secondary professional education, general secondary education or higher education, cause difficulties for the young people in choosing proper education and then the employment. Consequently, this work is of special importance for a broader treatment of policies and programs, effectiveness and their practical implementation in Albania. By this work we will aim to raise the awareness of key stakeholders involved in the policy making process and the beneficiaries of these social policies for employment and education.

The Methodology of this study is based on a comparative critical analysis of the employment policies in Albania, in particular the policies for promotion of employment of young people with professional education. A review is made regarding the conditions offered by the labor market in Albania and the causes of low statistics of the employment of young people with professional education.

This study analysis is based on the empirical data of INSTAT, National Employment Service and Vocational Training Center in Albania, which provide a clear overview of the current conditions of employment and professional education of the young people. Apart from local strategies and policies formulated about the employment and professional education, reference is made to foreign authors to provide theories and approaches in the interest of this study, which shall be detailed as below. The study precisely outlines the current conditions of employment of the young people in Albania, either of those serving their sentences in penitentiary institutions and clarifies social and economic issues or challenges caused by the unemployment among young people. Further, selection of education is made only upon current demand and not on the basis of a forecast for market needs in a near-term future.

EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND CURRENT POLICIES

There are data about the labor market, demonstrating that Albania is facing major challenges about the quantity, quality of employment of the young people and duration of their unemployment. Different institutions, either state or private ones, attempted to establish strategies and policies in order to improve the conditions of employment for young people with or without professional education. There are many reasons why the labor market in Albania does not provide employment opportunities to the young people. According to Prof. KostaBarjaba, the mechanism integrating the demand and offer is not always effective and manages to merge these key components of the labor market such as professional education and real need of the local market.

Accordingly, there is a time "gap" between the demand and offer, which may be "filled" through market research process (Barjaba, 2009, p.23) Based on the Diamond analysis on the basis of the researched markets, Mortensen and Pissaride supplied the search theory in their studies about the labor market. According to them the time required for the labor force

researchers, namely, the employers, in order to find and agree with the labor force providers, i.e, the employees, is longer that in any type of other market (Mortensen, Dale and Pissarides, Christopher, 1999, p.261).

Hence, in Albania this phenomenon cannot be overlooked, particularly in a market under transition. The high level of unemployment produced by this typology of economic growth poses an urgent need for the development of visionary employment policies, to ensure an optimal balance between economic growth and production, and employment increase and decrease (Mortensen and Christopher, 1994, p. 340).

EU Employment Directives should be a point of reference of this vision. In addition to the orientation of economic development to the sectors generating a larger number of vacancies such as tourism and a balanced distribution of investments of public works in the national territory, it also requires the development of another perspective that would be the priority of vocational training as one of the most effective active measures for the increase of employment. At this point, there are many reservations, especially if we consider that the professional post-qualification employment in Albania is four times lower than the EU indicator, about 17 per cent in comparison to 70 per cent (European Investment Bank, 2011, p.5)

Unemployment increase has also occurred in Albania during this period, according to Mortensen, Christopher and Pissarides, given the changes in relative productivity by education implied by observed wage changes, had unemployment compensation and employment protection policies been at European levels. (Mortensen, Christopher and Pissarides, 1999, p. 259)

Although EU regulation details minimum standards on employment services, accession countries need to adjust their employment services. In particular, according to EU Directives, the unemployment benefit is paid by the country in which the jobseeker was employed last (World Bank, 2002, p.238).

On the other hand, according to the World Bank, the educational and professional structure and qualifications of the workforce in many sectors of the CEE-10 economies do not reflect the needs of the national economy. To tackle the skills gap, education and training systems need to be modernized, and their links to the workplace strengthened. A significant portion of the youth population is leaving the education system without any professional education (Grabbe, Heather and Kalypso Nicolaidis, 2000, p. 382). Specifically, vocational schools are to be restructured in compliance with the European standards. Curricula and equipment at schools should be updated with the support of EU funds. Adult training, retraining and lifelong education are also a key to improving the quality of labor (Arvo Kuddo, 2002, p.135).

The Action Plan for the Employment of Young People in Albania (2010-2013, p.40) has highlighted "three main areas of policies influencing the employment of young people: 1) macroeconomic and sectorial policies and their impact on the creation of vacancies, 2) education and professional training policies and their harmonization with the labor market demands, 3) labor market policies filling the gap between the labor supply and demand and ensuring the protection of employees".

The macroeconomic and sectorial policies identify strategies such as: a) The National Strategy for Development and Integration in October 2007, "underlying the development of the democratic state and rule of law, fight against corruption and integration of the country in Europe and NATO. A higher priority is attached to the role of young people in the Albanian economy". (National Strategy for Development and Integration 2007, p.19) b). The National Strategy for Youth (2007-2013) "is focused on key objectives such as the employment of young people, youth representation and participation, health and social protection"...etc c) In 2007 the Strategy for Regional Development (2007-2012) "identified as a priority the agricultural and rural development. An identified challenge was the transformation of agriculture from a sector of production providing the means of living to a modern, commercial and competitive sector, thus fostering and creating opportunities for alternative incomes for rural employees abandoning this sector. Accordingly, the Agricultural and Rural Development Agency was established in order to ensure the direct support of rural and agricultural zones."

In educational and professional training policies, the Ministry of Education and Science started the implementation of the National Strategy for Education (2004-2015) "which was based on five main pillars such as school decentralization and autonomy, improvement of the teaching process, financing for the improvement of cost effectiveness, human resources development and development of a new educational and professional training system." The National Strategy for Pre-university Education (2009-2013) was produced in 2009 and "it identified short term and mid-term objectives and goals for the system and introduced policies about strategic objectives until 2013. This strategy covers the pre-school, elementary and 9-grade education, general and professional secondary education. It also strengthens the Integrated Plan of the Ministry for the year 2010". The Law on Albanian Framework of Qualifications was approved in March 2010 and a new law on professional education and training was adopted by the end of 2011. "The Law No.8872 "On professional education and training in Albania" as amended, contained a new structure for the Vocational Training Agency (VTA) system, role of social partners in the VTA development, autonomy of VTA schools and centers, institutional changes required and implementing structures."

Labor market policies are also essential for their strategies and implementing objectives. The Employment Strategy 2007-2013, "is based on the goals of the European Employment Strategy". However, although the formulation of the objectives to be achieved is more tailored to the market needs and with more modern terms, again it remains with almost the same objectives as in 1999, within the Employment Promotion Program. For instance, the Employment Strategy is focused on "1) promotion of an active employment policy through the creation of a modern system of employment services, 2) development of employment programs, 3) improvement of professional education and training, 4) reduction of informal employment, 5) improvement of working conditions and support to social dialogue, 6) improvement of employment services and of professional training system is in the focus of the strategy." Nevertheless, the Employment Strategy Program 2007-2013 remains more realistic and with more clear objectives and more adapted to the market demands.

The employment promotion programs were introduced in Albania in 1999. Indeed, this program set out some targets to achieve employment facilities for the young people but in fact most of them still remain unfulfilled. If we compare the Employment Promotion Program of 1999 with the Employment Strategy 2007 -2013, we will note that the formulation of intervention objectives is similar. This means that for almost many years the established goals were not fully met, therefore the active policies and programs for youth employment

programs and their implementation were stagnated, with the only difference of modernization and their approximation to the EU criteria. Let us see below the formulation of policies and programs for youth employment:

The Employment Promotion Program of 1999 introduced at that time as its main objectives, the seven following items:

" 1) Creation of new vacancies and reduction of unemployment level, 2) professional training of unemployed jobseekers, particularly in those areas where the training capacities are missing, 3) assistance of enterprises for expanding their activity and better selecting the labor force, 4) direct promotion of the trainees' employment, 5) minimization of illegal work, 6) involvement of the unemployed in employment programs, who are beneficiaries of the financial support schemes, for the purpose of reducing the cost of support programs for the unemployed, 7) promotion of young people's employment and of special groups of unemployed persons."

In the worst scenario, some of the young people who work come from families where both parents are unemployed or in the best case, with wages not covering the minimum vital requirements for a family. These young people are usually 15-19 years old. Based on the VTA statistics "the parents of these children are generally uneducated or with professions that do not provide safe employment or sufficient income for the family." According to ILO statistics, "the average age of population in Albania is 31.7 years old. Accordingly, the employment policies for the young people do not include only the 15-19 year old age groups or only the young people with families under a difficult economic situation. If the average age of population is 31.7 years old, then a large part of the population would be the beneficiary of good employment policies. "

However, we have to admit that although there is seemingly a large number of employment and professional education strategies and policies, in fact there is still a need for radical reforms. The professional education and training has a high potential to influence the economic growth and significantly contribute in order to make the people skilled for the labor market. Thus, VTA contributes to the reduction of poverty and acceleration of steps in the road to the European integration.

EFFECTIVENESS OF LABOR MARKET POLICIES AND PROGRAMS IN ALBANIA

In Albania, the Law "On Promotion of Employment" was drafted in 1995 and approved by the Law No. 7995, dated 20.09.1995^{*}. This Law placed special focus to the "employment, information and professional training, National Employment Service and adoption of general active policies in support of full, productive and free choice employment by the individuals" (Promotion of Employment Act 1995.(a.4), Tirana:Albania). This law has been subject to key amendments in 2005, which draft was approved later in July 2006, bringing other improvements in several issues such as: 1) improvement of its definitions and introduction of other adapted definitions, 2) introduction of the orientation and advisory concept for new jobs creation and employment, 3) new provisions related to modifications in the procedures of management of financial funds of professional training, which entered into force as a result of the Law No. 8872 dated 19.03.2002, "On professional education and training in the Republic of Albania".(MLSAEO,2007,p.23)

Articles 3 and 4 of this Law clearly specify its main goals. Respectively, the "**Article 3** emphasizes that every individual looking for a job shall be addressed for registration as an unemployed person to the National Employment Offices which gives appropriate advice and orientation for the labor market. Foreign citizens, without Albanian citizenship, coming from countries which have or do not have bilateral agreements with Albania can also benefit from this Law. This Law is also beneficial to the foreign citizens married to Albanian citizens who are residents in the Republic of Albania."(Promotion of Employment Act 1995.(a.3,4), Tirana:Albania)

The Article 4, in its paragraphs **1** and **2**, emphasizes the measures of national employment policies in support of both the promotion of employment and provision of related financial support. Economic development, employment and development of active state policies for employment are primarily focused on the concept that every citizen looking for a job has the right job, the job has a fruitful performance and the individual can choose the job in accordance with his skills and capabilities.

In Albania, there are also several programs in support of those looking for a job and the market labor offers in the country. Let's have a look ahead on the specifics of these programs which have a common ground in the reduction of the registered unemployed people in the National Employment Offices, and the shift of these individuals from the passive financial support scheme, such as the unemployment financial support and economic support.

The programs currently being applied in Albania are as follows: (MLSAEO,2007,p.22)

1) Employment promotion program of unemployed people; "the employers providing temporary employment for unemployed people (3-6 months) shall benefit financial support of their monthly wages up to 100 % of the minimum wage and the expenses for the social security of the beneficiary employed people. If the beneficiary employed people are employed for a period up to 1 year and with regular contracts, the employer shall benefit a financial support equal to a minimum monthly wage and the obligatory contribution to social security for a period up to 5 months. If the beneficiary employed people do not have related professional training skills for the job to be performed, and the employees have the possibility to offer that training, then he can benefit an increase of 10-20 percent of the total fund for each individual employed". (MLSAEO,2007,p.22)

2) Employment promotion program through on-the-job-training practices; "this option support the employers conducting specific training programs with the beneficiary unemployed people followed by the creations of jobs for a number of the trained individuals. In this case, employers shall be supported with the wages and social security expenses for the trained unemployed people they employ, provided that the employers offering these training sessions shall at least employ 40% of the trained individuals". (MLSAEO,2007,p.23)

3) Employment promotion program through institutional training and education;" the employment offices shall assign and provide appropriate training for the beneficiary unemployed individuals of those companies which: a) guarantee the employment of individuals after the training, or b) show through studies and investigation of the labor market that the training shall be useful for the participants. The beneficiary individuals refusing the participation in these training courses are checked out from the list of unemployed people and their unemployment wage is interrupted." (MLSAEO,2007,p.23)

4) Employment promotion program for the unemployed individuals of female gender; “this program is focused on the integration in the labor market of marginalized women, such as Roma women, ex-trafficking abused women, elderly and disabled women”, and; (MLSAEO,2007,p.25)

5) In 2007 for the first time it was applied the employment promotion program for unemployed individuals holding a Bachelor diploma, “who have completed their studies in or out the country by means of their participation in professional training and education programs in public or private institutions/ enterprises. Public employers are obliged to provide employment for these unemployed individuals engaging them under a free of charge policy, based on the internship status scheme of employment of 1 in 50 personnel of the public administration.” (MLSAEO,2007,p.26)

As described above, Albania has in place the appropriate policies and programs but they shall cover and balance the protection of workers as well. It is necessary to develop legal arrangements for the types of contracts including obligations for both employers and employees, as well as other procedures including the removal from job. The basic legislation in Albania is the ‘Job Code’ with legal effects from 1995 with various key amendments in 2003. “Employment Promotion Legislation (EPL) offers job security for the covered employed individuals, but it can also give undesirable consequences concerning the discouragement of creation of new jobs, especially in the public sector.” (WBA,2006,p.6-7)

As a conclusion, Albania has related policies and programs on employment of active labor force, but the key question mark is to the quality of their implementation. Quite often, business and company entrepreneurs are not well-informed on Albanian legislation. Sometimes they are not aware of the forms of financial support provided by the government in cases of employment of young individuals, marginalized women, or regarding the training of unemployed people; not to say that a skeptical view is in place regarding the question of validity and implementation of these employment promotion programs in Albania.

We have examined below some issues of the labor market in Albania, where some causes of domestic unemployment were explored. Lack of effectiveness of the labor market programs only discourages the employers and increases the number of unemployed. According to ILO (International Labor Office) in Albania, many problems are identified in relation to the effectiveness of labor market programs, where some of the most distinguished are: “1) incompliance between the level of professional skills of the jobseekers and professional skills required by the labor market, 2) low demand for the labor force, 3) unemployment period is long for the jobseekers due to the absence of information about job vacancies.”(Corbanese and Rosas,2009.p.9-10)

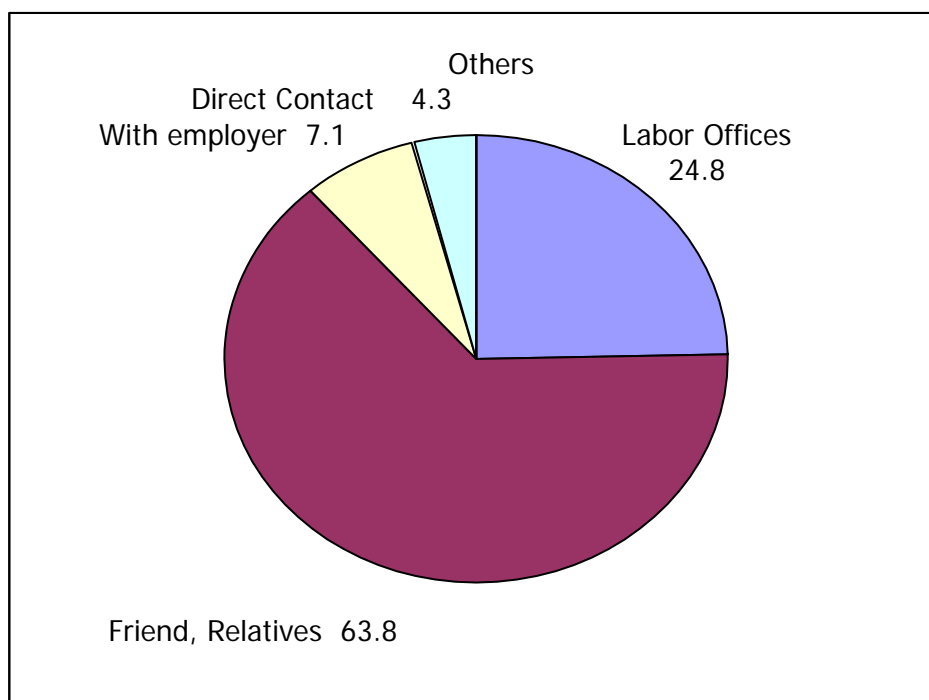
Lack of precise information for finding a job discourages the jobseekers. The shift of unemployed individuals to the labor market is a challenging and chain process, therefore the effective implementation of labor market programs is crucial.

The employment counseling programs are essential and have been assumed as cost-effective programs, enabling the reduction of the number of unemployed. It is critical for these programs to support the unemployed, thus making possible the counseling process adaptation to real needs and potentials of those persons, jointly setting more realistic employment objectives. In Albania, this type of service to the unemployed is fictitious in

most of the cases as the relations between the employment experts and the unemployed are generally short. Consequently no specific forecasts for each unemployed client may be realized. Hence, the provided service is less likely to comply with the client's needs and the type of job he/she is looking for.

On the other hand, another challenging factor is the information of jobseekers about free vacancies. The information of jobseekers via internet has been applied in Albania only during last years as this type of information was generally provided through personal acquaintances of each individual and a limited number of people was informed and could find job through the employment offices. However, not all jobseekers have proper skills to apply for jobs via these websites or be informed of free vacancies.

Figure 1: World Bank of Albania 2009 cited in Labor Market Assessment, 2009,p.9



Job training programs developing the professional skills of jobseekers are an objective which, if effectively accomplished, has a major impact on the reduction of unemployment. In Albania, the Vocational Training Centers are extended to the main cities and towns and offer professional training for some of the professions currently required from the labor market. According to the data of PTA (Professional Training Agency), the young people who attend vocational training courses are more oriented to the labor market needs; therefore they have larger employment opportunities in comparison to the young people who follow higher education studies. "Accordingly, only for the first nine months of 2011, 2086 young people have been certified all over the country in different professional profiles and only 460 of them were employed, where 230 are females. The largest number of employed people is reported in Shkodra district for the telemarketing course where 150 young people are employed" (Shoraj and Zenelaj, 2012,p.8-10). We have observed that the professional training at these centers indeed covers the most required professions of the labor market but there are also some challenging issues in these institutions such as shortages of premises which are necessary to exercise the adequate working practice for a specific profession,

unqualified human resources, concentration of training in theoretical aspects rather than practical ones.

In particular, compared to the training sessions conducted only in the teaching environments, the training which combines the classroom learning with on-job learning increases by 30 per cent its chances for positive effects on the labor market and when combined with other employment services; the positive impact probability is increased at 53 per cent. (Fares and Puerto, 2008, p.21-25). Also, this program, although proving to be productive for the employment of local jobseekers, is again associated with a series of problems which make it partly effective.

Jobseekers subsidy programs are indeed likely to have a positive impact on the increase of the number of employed. The reduction of labor force costs for the employers is a policy encouraging the latter to increase the number of employees in their enterprises.

However, according to ILO assessment about the effectiveness of labor market policies in Albania, "a series of evaluations carried out for the employment subsidy programs suggest that the latter may increase the chances for the disadvantaged individuals to fill the job vacancies. Alternatively, there are insufficient facts demonstrating that these programs really increase the number of available job vacancies." (Corbanese and Rosas, 2009, p.16-17)

In addition to the foregoing, it seems that the subsidy programs for the jobseekers in Albania have no significant impact on the reduction of the number of unemployed. There are two potential causes to produce this type of result. Firstly, similar policies are little implemented in Albania and secondly, not all local enterprises and businesses are realistically informed of the employment promotion programs and policies. Hence, it seems that the system as a whole does not properly function, the lack of cooperation between respective factors and bureaucracy represent a main barrier rendering these programs ineffective.

In the meantime, the employment promotion programs for marginalized women or employment promotion programs for the young Bachelor graduates, are currently more challenging in respect of their implementation. "Over 40% of women have not participated in the labor market. For many women it is hard to find a job and there is a high level of unemployment such as the long-term unemployment. The labor market situation for women is particularly negative and demanding in urban areas where only a little more than one third are employed and the unemployment level is almost 30%." (WBA, 2009, p.78-82) However, according to the World Bank, the involvement level of women in the labor market in Albania is very low compared to Europe and shows lower figures in comparison to Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina or Macedonia.

Again, numerous difficulties have been encountered in this case for the implementation of this program as a whole. On the other hand, the employment of young Bachelor graduates is a challenge for the policy makers in Albania. "The trends of young people to follow higher education studies, without taking into consideration the real needs of the market for this type of profession they may benefit from such education, has made the market for young Bachelor graduates be oversaturated, generally in branches such as law, international relations, diplomacy, psychology etc." (Shoraj and Zenelaj, 2012, p.8-10)

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND PREFERENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

During the last ten years in Albania it is noted that almost all young people are apt to follow higher education studies although their real opportunities are often not taken into consideration to successfully complete this cycle. Above all, they do not consider the employment opportunities offered by a certain profile of higher education selected by them. This group excludes the young people who, notwithstanding their desire to follow higher education studies, due to different economic, social, physical or health inabilities, cannot follow higher education studies in their potential preferred profiles.

In other countries of Europe "the attendance of studies and professional courses is not a choice of only the group of young people in need as often they make similar choices with the guarantee offered by this type of education for the purposes of employment and generation of incomes. The market demand for certain professions such as mechanics, electro-mechanics, plumbers, cooks, cook assistants, babysitters, tailors, engine-mechanics, estheticians etc, is clear, consequently some of them offer appropriate sustainable employment and incomes". (ILO, 2010, p.43)

"The Vocational Training Centers in Albania operate in the biggest cities of the country, respectively in Durrës, Fier, Vlorë, Gjirokastër, Elbasan, Korçë, Shkodër and Tirana. All these centers provide training courses in different professions, where most of them are followed by the young people from these districts." (Ministry of Education and Science, 2006, p.11) According to the data of these centers, some courses are much more preferred by the young people and this is divided according to gender.

Accordingly, in the "Vocational Training Center No 1 and No 4 in Tirana" the young people prefer the following courses: social assistance, electro-mechanics, plumbing, cooling-heating installations, wiring (electrical installations), babysitting, auto-repair. As noted above, on the basis of their registration and certification, the young people in Tirana prefer the following courses: auto-repair, secretary, INF, sowing, air conditioning repair, plumbing, electro-mechanics, hairdressing, solar panels, babysitting etc."(VTA, 2011, p.6)

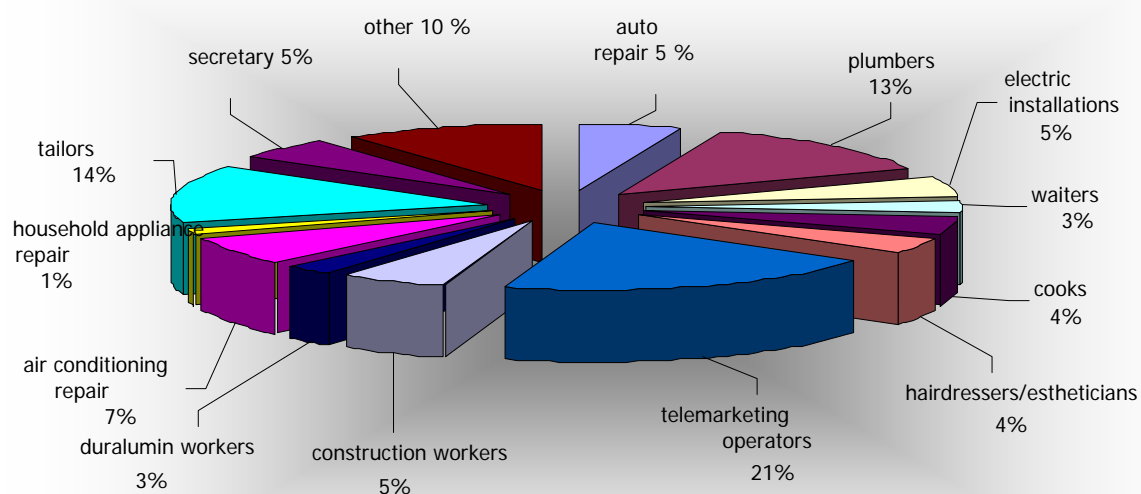
Meanwhile, in the main cities of the country where the youth vocational training centers are extended as in Durrës, Fier, Vlorë, Gjirokastër, Elbasan, Korçë and Shkodër, there are different preferences of young people for professional qualifications. The most common preferences of the young people are as follows:

"In Durrës the preferences of young people are focused on the courses of sowing, plumbing, secretary and electrical installations. In Fier, in 2011 it was observed that the most preferred professional courses were: sowing, secretary, network repair and installation, tile-cleaning, auto-repair, cashier etc, where there is an average of 150 certified young people. It is still worth mentioning that in Fier town, none of the youngsters certified during 2011, was employed. In Vlora, a total of 59 young people have attended professional qualifications where 35 of them were employed immediately after the certification. The most preferred courses of young people were: cooking with 22 certified and 15 employed persons and secretary, with the participation of 17 young women and the employment of five of them."(VTA, 2011, p.13)

"In Gjirokastër, the most common preferences of young people to attend courses during 2011 were: sowing with 14 certified young people and the course for tile-cleaning with 7 certified young people but none of them is employed. In Elbasan, the young people have

followed courses such as sowing, cooking, auto-repair, electrical installations, plumbing, duralumin works etc. Even in Elbasan, the number of the employed young people remains limited. In Korca, the number of employed young people seems larger than in Elbasan, Gjirokastër and Fier. 72 young people are certified and 29 of them are employed. The courses for plumbers, social operators and air conditioning repair are the most preferred ones. In Shkodër, the trends of young people for some courses is almost the same except the course of telemarketing operator, where 229 young people were certified and 150 of them were employed only in 2011. As for the other courses where the young people were certified in sowing, secretary, household appliances repair, plumber and hydro-sanitary works, none of the course attendants was employed". (VTA, 2011, p.17)

Figure 2: Ministry of Education and Science 2012, cited by VTA 2011, p.21.



Following an overview with all data gathered by VTA, 2086 young people were certified in 2011 in different professional profiles and only 460 of them were employed, where 230 are females. The largest number of the employed is concentrated in Shkoder district in the telemarketing operator course, where 150 young people are employed. Overall, according to the data, out of 2086 certified young people 842 are females. In the meantime, the young people who attended courses at reduced fees are the ones with insufficient family incomes; their number is 1673 where 708 are females. "Meanwhile, the youngsters who attended courses free of charge are the focus groups such as Roma young people, orphans, trafficked females, disabled persons, former prisoners, and returned immigrants, as well as persons serving their sentences in penitentiary institutions" (VTA, 2011, p.18). Another issue to be further explored in this article is the way how the professional or educational courses are provided for the young people who currently serve their sentence in penitentiary institutions.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE SERVING THEIR SENTENCE IN ALBANIAN PENITENTIARY INSTITUTIONS

There are sufficient data from the Albanian Committee of Helsinki about the treatment of young convicts in the Albanian Penitentiary Institutions but in this part of the study we will

attach priority to the right of education and attendance of professional courses by the young people serving their sentence in these institutions.

According to a study carried out by the Committee of Helsinki, the young people under 25-years of age who are serving their sentence prove to have a low level of education, 8-9 grade education and often they have even not completed it. "In Albania, the young people are partly rehabilitated in Veqarr prison and in Prison No. 313 in Tirana (which is of high security for the pre-trial detention and of ordinary security for the convicts) and this occurs because there are broader opportunities for more specific treatments amounting to the education of this group." (ACH, 2002, p.24)

The educational programs for these institutions are regulated by the Law No.8328, dated 16.04.1998, "On rights and treatment of imprisoned persons". According to article 37 of this Law, the education and cultural and professional training are realized through the organization of school and professional courses. This education and training is compulsory for the persons under 18 years of age. The law is further extended when in its second paragraph it highlights that the attendance of professional studies should be promoted and favored by the use of distant learning courses. (Education, Act 1998, No. 8328, a.37)

In fact this article of the above cited law is a provision which is very little implemented in the practice of the Albanian prisons. "Thus, the compulsory education of juveniles is partly realized and only in Veqarr prison. Meanwhile, according to the statistics delivered in June 2006, there were 29 juveniles in the Prison 313 and none of them followed compulsory education." (ACH, 2006. p.89) Also, to date there are no convicts to be encouraged to attend distant learning professional courses. "According to law, special importance should be attached to the professional and cultural training of the young people under 25 years of age, representing 1/3 of the convicts of that age in these institutions." (ACH, 2002. p.83) Although it is clear there is a lot of work to be done for the improvement and enhancement of the educational level in these institutions, it is worth mentioning the work of the Professional Training Agency, which offers in these institutions some professional courses, depending on the available resources of Penitentiary Institutions.

According to the most recent data of VTA for the year 2011, professional courses for the convicts were provided in all prisons of Albania. Courses such as those on sowing, secretary, esthetics, hairdressing, embroidery, woodcraft and pottery artistic works, cooking, computer skills, foreign languages such as English, Italian and Spanish, are provided within the possible means and logistics in the prison facilities. Although there are no optimal possibilities and there is a lot of room for changes and improvements, it follows that in 2011 the VTA specialists offered professional courses in all towns where the center is operational. There is a total of 1229 convicts who have attended professional courses, respectively in the institutions of the main cities of the country such as Tirana, Durrës, Fier and Vlora." (VTA, 2012, p.1)

In respect of the education of convicts the Albanian prisons have shared similar experiences in the remote past. If we refer to studies in the field of prison history, "during the period 1917-1933, the issue of young people's education has been carefully explored and implemented within the opportunities provided at that time. The educational programs in Albanian prisons were developed even during the communist regime, although they had a politicized content and were approved by the party in power" (Sulaj, 2000, p.36).

Currently, it is noted a new perception of the educational work and education but in fact, this is mostly made possible due to initiatives of the heads of these institutions. "Heads and education specialists at these institutions shared the concern that in many cases these programs were not restructured or they were not unified with the public school programs or the programs were not successfully completed." (Sufaj, 2008, p.68)

These employees and specialists properly raise the concern about the education of young people in prisons as it is exactly this contingent to really represent a risk for the society and the individuals, if they would not be educated on the basis of each European standard. The education of youth generations either within these institutions or out of them, is a duty of everyone. A safe and better future may be assured only if proper importance and priority is attached to the education of young generations.

CONCLUSIONS

By the end of this work, we stress out as follows:

This study is instrumental to understand the reality and situation of young people in the labor market. Data in this study and critical analysis provide broad information about the employment negative experience of young people with professional education and is focused on the importance of attending professional studies as a current market requirement. We have used a critical platform and analysis such as to assist the scholars of fields of economy or sociology, either local or foreign, to compare in latter periods of time the progress of this trend and consequently, of the entire Albanian society. This study contributes to basically channel education to the professional one, as a need in Albania during the recent years and attempts to increase the awareness of the whole society for values of education and professional employment.

Based on all data reviewed for this work, there is a rich legal framework for the employment of young people in Albania. In particular, during the last years, changes have occurred which are increasingly adapted to the real needs of the domestic market and the characteristics of the Albanian society. However, they inherently seem to be the same as in the past, implying that the issues of young people's employment have remained stagnant, the implementation of these policies has still not resolved the situation which is highly problematic.

Conversely, in addition to the issue of policy implementation, Albania is characterized by the phenomenon of the quality and quantity of the education of young people, either in professional, general or higher education. The young people are apt to attend bachelor studies but without considering the market demands for this type of education. Generally, the attendance of higher education studies in the country is a kind of trend mostly associated with pompously-labeled professions such as international relations, diplomacy, law, psychology, economics, medicine etc.

Unlike the higher education, the young people who attend professional education or professional courses seem to be more realistic with their choices. As regards the professional courses they follow, there is a higher level of adaptation to the market needs for employment.

However, even this group of young people encounters a lot of challenges with their further employment. Women face hardships as the professional courses they may follow such as

secretary, sowing, hairdressing...etc offer more limited employment opportunities and these young women are generally self-employed.

The education of young people serving their sentence in Penitentiary Institutions, still remains a challenge. According to all available data, they are not provided qualitative education. This may occur due to difficult conditions in these institutions such as overcrowding or absence of necessary means for the practice of professional courses. The key stakeholders should pay more importance to these factors, in order to realize an optimal professional education for these young people.

Failure to implement policies for the employment of young people with professional and advanced education, has led to informal employment of the young people, mainly of men with professional education but there are also high figures for those with higher education. Their low salaries, non-inclusion in social insurance scheme represents a real challenge of the Albanian economy. This phenomenon reduces poverty, insecurity and is associated with different social issues. Consequently, the growth of informal economy brings less credible statistics and lower figures for the official rate of economic growth.

If the number of people recruited in the field of informal economy and working hours in that service are increased, then the level of participation in formal economy and the respective number of working houses will drop. Though, there are two opposite theories about the effect of informal economy on economic growth. Firstly, the collapse of informal economy affects economic growth as the incomes from taxes boosting public expenditure, are increased. Secondly, informal economy is more competitive and effective in comparison to the formal sector and in this way, economic growth is promoted.

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