

Factors influencing employment for tertiary education graduates at the selected universities

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Abstract: The graduates of tertiary education level are one of the risk groups in the economically active age, who have a significant problem to find a job in the labour market. The research has been focused on defining the key factors influencing the creation of competitive advantages of the tertiary education graduates entering labour market as well as to identify the effectiveness of these factors in the process of entering the tertiary education graduates in the labour market. The methods of analysis were used in the processing of a survey of graduates from three universities of the Czech Republic, namely: the Masaryk University Czech Republic, the Mendel University in Brno, and the Brno University of Technology, at all levels of the higher education degree (Bachelor, Master, PhD) completed by the respondents graduating no earlier than two years ago. The data were collected through an online questionnaire, published in the February and March 2013 on the server <http://rela.mendelu.cz>, at the number of 150 returned filled questionnaires. Based on the analysis of secondary sources, there were for the research purposes defined five key factors influencing the efficiency of entering the labour market. These factors are the analysis of the current labour market situation and the rational preference of specialization, the active search and participating in programs and the internships focused on gaining the practical experience, the acquisition of professional skills, the use of institutional support and professional assistance and the factor of the building and use of networking.

Key words: competitive advantage, graduates of tertiary education level, factors of success, labour market, unemployment

The development of the labour market is accompanied by constant changes. In the current period of discontinuity, the labour market develops qualitatively and structurally, affected by the global market accompanying phenomena (Heid and Larch 2012; Potrafke 2013; Lindley, Machin 2014). The changes are not only in the labour supplies and demands, the requirements and expectations of the individual entities, but also in the market segmentation (Kotler and Caslione 2009). One of the varying values is also the number of unemployed persons. The unemployment shows a still rising curve with minimal declines due to the seasonal fluctuations from the year of 2008, which was characterized as the beginning of the current financial and economic crisis (Euroskop 2013). The graduates of the tertiary education level are one of the risk groups in the economically active age, who have a significant problem to find a job in the labour market (Eggert et al. 2010). The unemployment rate of graduates of universities and colleges is affected

by a wide range of factors as are the economic, social, and psychological factors (Brown et al. 2010). In the economic terms, it is primarily the economic situation of unemployment, the current labour demand and supply (Cardoso 2007). In the terms of social and psychological factors, there are crucial especially the educational and professional structure of the graduates, the prestige of a particular industry and individual preferences (De Vos and Soens 2008).

There were recorded in the database of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic 585 809 people to the date of January 31, 2013 (MPSV 2013), of which there has been 35 524 unemployed graduates and young people (secondary and tertiary education), who were not added to the overall unemployment rate of 6.1%. The year-on-year growth demonstrates an increase by 4044 graduates. This amount exceeds the optimal level of unemployment specified in the limit of 4 to 6% (MPSV 2013). The newcomers into the labour market, graduating in the economies hit

by the financial crisis, are more likely to experience a job mismatch and to suffer from underemployment than those who graduate in an economy untouched by the current global economic depression (Kahn 2010). Although the unemployment rate of the tertiary education graduates is the lowest in comparison with other job seekers in the labour market, still it is a serious problem that must be addressed in order to find possible approaches leading to a solution.

The inability to find employment affects not only the graduates, but it is touching especially economically also their immediate surroundings (Becker 1993). The unemployment compensation does not apply to the graduates, according to the Employment Act No. 435/2004 Coll. (MPSV 2013) applicable since 1st of January 2013. The amendment of the Act provides that if a job seeker did not work at least 270 working days in the past 36 months, which means that he/she did not pay the health and social insurance for this period, he/she is not entitled to the unemployment compensation claims. The exception is getting support for past inclusion in the Job Retraining Course. For many of the graduates it then becomes difficult to achieve any social support. The process of calculating the entitlement to any social benefit is based on the evaluation of the income of persons living together in one household. In case the graduate lives together with his or her parents, then the entitlement to the social assistance is regarded in relation to the income of both parents. The unemployment rate of graduates reflects the percentage of graduates who remained jobless and have been registered at the Labour Offices (MPSV 2013). The graduates who seek employment outside the Czech Republic, or have not been registered in the Labour Office are not included in the unemployment data registered by the MPSV.

Despite of change in approach to the calculation of the unemployment rate in the Czech Republic, which has been updated in January 2012, according to the general rate of unemployment resulting from the outputs of past quarterly surveys of the Czech Statistical Office, and according to the registered unemployment rate, resulting from past statistical surveys of the Labour Offices (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), the results still show a significant increase of unemployment.

The past current trend of unemployment and the limited available job offers lead to an increased competition among the applicants. The results of the increasing competition are not only the limited offer of the job vacancies, but also a significant increase in the number of graduates (De Koning 2007). The num-

ber of the tertiary education graduates was 400 000 people in the Czech Republic in the year of 2011. As compared with 2001, with the number 204 000 graduates, it is a 96% increase. There are situations in the labour market when the graduates of tertiary education, under the pressure of demand for available vacancies, accept a job with lower qualification requirements and they are thus devaluing their skills and competencies. The negative consequences of underemployment are rather similar to those of unemployment in the terms of a lower well-being, a lower life satisfaction and more physical and psychological strain (Feldman 1996; Kinicki et al. 2000; McKee-Ryan and Harvey 2011). The lower quality of accepted job impairs the career satisfaction as well as the career-enhancing behaviours and the career prospects (McKee-Ryan and Harvey 2011). In connection with the above mentioned data and the change of the employment policy, which is slowly changing from just taking care of the unemployed to actively promoting the forms of employment, there is necessary a proactive approach of the tertiary education graduates to find an appropriate use.

The Czech Republic joined the European Employment Strategy (EU 2011) at 5th of May 1999, when there was approved the first National Employment Plan. The plan was approved in order to reduce the continually rising unemployment, and to stimulate a long-term increase in the employment rate. This step became the basis for the reform of the employment policy. In this project, the National Reform Programme implemented in the years 2005–2008 was initiated in 2010 to the program ‘Europe 2020’ the implementation of which is currently under process.

At the research of the employers needs and the graduates’ readiness, implemented by the National Institute for Vocational Education (NÚOV) in 2008, there were the most frequently cited as the reasons for the lack of interest in the employment of the graduates the lack of experience, unrealistic expectations about the wage, working hours, the employment status, a low level of the labour morals and a longer time the graduates need for the incorporation.

Since the beginning of the 90th, the problems of the transition of the graduates into the labour process in the European environment are characterized by several topics: “*speed changes of job skills requirements, dramatic structural changes of labour force caused by the introduction of new technology and new managerial concepts, the globalization and Europeanization of economy and society, intense massification of higher education from half of the 80th in*

many industrial societies, increasing unemployment, decreasing transparency and continuity of careers” (Koucký and Zelenka 2009). Far from being just a local issue, the ongoing neo-liberalisation of higher education has engendered a discursive shift in the definitions of employability. Traditionally, universities regarded the graduate employment as an aspect of the institutions’ relationship with the labour market, and one where they enjoyed a significant degree of discretion. Now, employability is a performative function of the universities, shaped and directed by the state, which is seeking to supplant labour markets (Gül et al. 2010; Marginson 2010). The higher education expansion has resulted in an excessive number of the college graduates, which has led to the current highly competitive labour market (Wu 2011). The transition from school to work is an important phase for the graduates. Leaving student life behind and beginning a new life as a full-time employee requires important career-related decisions that can determine the graduates’ future career success (Ng and Feldman 2007; Hoyer and Saks 2008).

The success of graduates in the transition from study into the working environment does not bring just the material satisfaction, but also social contacts, the access to the network building, the possibility of applying the knowledge, the development of skills and the space to gain new experience. Influencing of the career and the future attitude to work is essential for the stabilization of personal identity. The errors during the movement from school to work can injure the graduates, as well as the society in general in the terms of costs and problems related to unemployment (McKee-Ryan and Harvey 2011).

The research objectives were defined as follows:

- I. Based on the results of the qualitative analysis of the literary and electronic resources to define the key factors influencing the creation of competitive advantage tertiary graduates entering the labour market.
- II. To verify and determine the effectiveness of these factors in the process of adaptation of the tertiary education graduates into the labour market in the Czech Republic, from the output data processing the secondary sources.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

To fulfil the objectives, there were used the methods and methodologies in accordance with the nature of

the problem. For the analysis, data processing and identification the key factors of competitive advantage graduates, there has been used the method of description.

The literary sources are derived from 11.25% of the Czech data and publications, mainly from the surveys on the status of the college and university graduates in the Czech labour market and the research of the Labour Office staff opinion about the school graduates application in the period of the economic crisis. This representation of Czech authors was beneficial and necessary for the research due to their knowledge and orientation in the local labour market and also the methodology of the social and legislative policy of the Czech Republic. Based on the results of the literary sources content analysis, there was selected by random sampling a group of professional publications on the topic of the graduates employment. These literary sources are available at www.sciencedirect.com in the period from 2006 till 2013. We have then defined five factors, which were investigated by the questionnaire survey.

The methods of analysis were used in the processing of secondary data sources (Vencurová 2013), a survey of the random sample of graduates of the Mendel University (the oldest university of agriculture and forestry in the Czech lands, established in 1919). The minor control samples were also tested at the Masaryk University in Brno and the Technical University in Brno. The term of tertiary education graduates includes for the research purposes all levels of higher education degree (Bachelor, Master, PhD) completed by the respondents not earlier than two years ago. The specializations of the completed study were determined by the frequency marked by the respondents in the questionnaires.

The data were collected through an online questionnaire, published in February and March 2013 on the server <http://rela.mendelu.cz>, at the number of 150 returned filled questionnaires. For the interpretation of the data, there was used the relative abundance, and the selected combinations of questions were tested using the independent χ^2 test in the Statistica. The final results were visualized by the tables, bar and pie charts.

The research was focused, based on literary source study, on the following five factors.

I. Analyzing the situation in the labour market, working with the information related to the choice of the field with regard to the possibilities of the practical application. The rational preference of specialization in what the market is not saturated

yet and what seems to be promising in the long term period was considered.

The National Institute of Vocational Education (NÚOV) publishes in the project titled Education – Information – Advice – Career VIP every year a report on the status of unemployed graduates in the labour market (MPSV 2010). Another source of information can be the reported data on the employability of the graduates of Czech universities and their faculties, published annually by the Centre for Education Policy at Charles University (SVP FI UK). In Q1 2012, there was carried out by the Company LMC as part of the University Online at Jobs.cz (LMC 2013) a questionnaire survey that involved 1479 respondents from among the applicants for study at university. The outcomes of the survey showed that the key factors in deciding what university and what specialization to study are the inherent interest in the field (98%), the quality of teaching and teachers (95%), the school fees (83%), the opportunity to make contact with employers (75%), the prestige of the school (73%). For future students, there is also essential the difficulty of admission (44%), lower demands of getting the degree (25%) or the choice of school by its location (36%).

II. Active search for and involvement into programs, internships, the focus on gaining practical experiences in the field of study, in order to gain practical skills and theoretical knowledge acquired via the extension study. The individual must be primarily responsible for the development of new competencies related to the management of own potential and through that the career (Briscoe and Hall 2006).

III. Achieving the quality technical and professional knowledge and skills, gaining maximum competences that the educational institution can provide, because the employers set the highest demands in terms of the knowledge, skills and competencies on the tertiary education graduate. The emphasis is placed on the communication skills 96%, knowledge of foreign languages 96%, and the ability to make decisions 94%, to take the responsibility and to deal with information 94% (Skácelová and Vojtěch 2009).

IV. The utilization of the institutional support and assistance in finding employment. Until April 30, 2004 (when was adopted the Act No. 435/2004 Coll. Employment), the employers in the Czech Republic, who employed the graduate in the same specialization the graduate had studied, received a financial contribution from the Labour Office for the so-called “graduate job”. Since 2010, it is possible to use the support inside the project named “the practice – the education – the employment”, which is designed for

the job seekers with the current finishing of secondary and tertiary education (MPSV 2013).

V. Construction and utilization of networking, which means creating and building a long-term network of professional contacts that are instrumental in initiating and developing a career. DeLong (2013) showed that up to 60% of job offers are not cast primarily through a public tender, but through networking contacts, the so-called hidden job market. With the importance of the available position, this percentage is increasing.

THE RESULTS

The questionnaire survey was carried out through the on-line questionnaire, published in the February and March 2013 on the server <http://rela.mendelu.cz>. The research was attended by 150 respondents – graduates of three universities in the South Moravia region of the Czech Republic. The research was carried out at a random sample of the Mendel University graduates (91 respondents), the minor control samples were also tested among the Masaryk University graduates (31 respondents) and the Technical University in Brno graduates (28 respondents). Of these respondents, 87 received the bachelor’s degree education, 60 the master’s degree and three respondents did not answer this question. It means that the bachelor level tertiary education was represented by 57%, the master’s diploma by 40% and 3% of master’s respondents have left this question unanswered. The age structure of the respondents was composed of the categories 22–25 (64%), 26–29 (22%), and due to the lengthening of study, also the category of 30–33 years (8%) and 34 and more years (1%). The question about the age was not answered by 5% of the respondents. The gender composition of the respondents consisted from 57% women, 38% of men and 5% of the respondents did not answer this question.

The most frequently mentioned subject of study was economics, which was completed by 42% of the respondents, followed by 21% of technical sciences, humanities and social sciences represented 10%. Farm, forestry and veterinary sciences were represented by the same number of the respondents, 6%, the same as natural science. Law and education were represented by 3%, the study of culture by 2%. The priority status of economic sciences is partly influenced by the environment in which the survey was conducted and the current preference of these subjects among the students. In the questionnaire survey, economic

sciences were separated of from other humanities and social sciences for a more accurate interpretation, although normally they fall into the category of social sciences. In a joint evaluation, there should, therefore, humanities and social sciences be represented by 60% of the respondents. The Identified Preferences Point to the irrational choices of the field of study are based on the assumption of the options and the quality of the application only, not on the real state of the supply and demand professional focus in the labour market. The completed specializations of respondents study are published in the Table 1.

The question whether the respondents passed any professional experience during their studies was answered by 105 respondents, 69% of them did pass it, 45 respondents, i.e. 30%, answered negatively. The differences between universities in the students' access to gaining experience during the study were minimal. According to the respondents' answers, work experience during their studies was received by 74% of the Masaryk University graduates, by 68% of the Mendel University in Brno graduates and by 68% of the Technical University in Brno. How much are these experiences relevant to specialization of their studies and thus beneficial for future, this was investigated by another question.

The comment on the time spent by gaining the practical experience was expressed by 113 respondents, 37 respondents did not answer the question. The practice during the studies was done by 34% of the respondents. The amount of 26% respondents spent

two or more years by gaining a practical experience, almost the entire undergraduate studies. Less than six months were spent in the practice by 8% of the students only.

Regarding the question whether and to what extent the passed practice and temporary jobs were associated with the studied specialization and could thus contribute to creating competitive advantage in the job market, we got an ambiguous answer. The graduates worked during their studies in the fields related very closely to the studied university specializations, such as marketing and PR, in 15%, the financial, administrative and IT services in 18% and manufacturing in 3%. However, the respondents also worked in the positions that were not connected to the studied courses at all. In the hospitality industry as receptionists and the staff, there worked 22% of the respondents, as workers in the construction and in the industrial cleaning 7% of the respondents, as salesmen and helpers in the stores 23%, as a call centres staff 7%. Although the respondents could not gain any professional know-how or specialization in these sorts of jobs, they can be considered positive. Outside the economic benefits brought to the respondents, work habits, the orientation into practise environment, a clear idea about their future direction were the main contributions.

For more accurate responses received in the survey, the respondents were asked whether they completed during their studies any kind of internship or a work activity, aimed specifically at the subject of their

Table 1. Completed specializations of the respondents study

Study specialization	Frequency of response
Economic sciences	72
Engineering	36
Humanities and social sciences	17
Agriculture, forestry and veterinary sciences	11
Natural science	11
Other science (computer science, chemistry and food technology, philology, processing furniture)	8
Jurisprudence	6
Pedagogics, teacher training and social care	5
Sciences of culture	3
Health, medicine and pharmaceutical sciences	2
No answer	1

Some respondents studied two courses simultaneously during their tertiary degree.

Source: own data from processing the survey

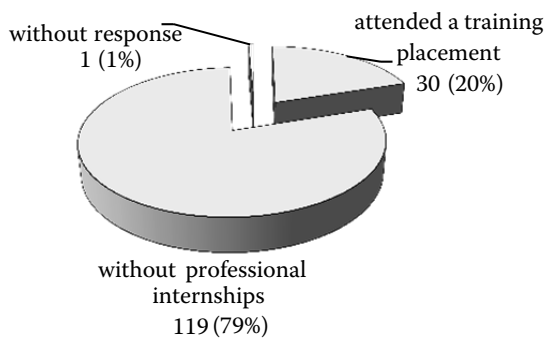


Figure 1. Completed internship, work activity, aimed at the study subject

Source: own data from processing the survey

study. The responses are fundamentally different from the previous inquiry about the work experience as such. Given the extensive opportunities which are currently offered to university students in the form of professional internships, among the Czech and foreign resident students, there were only 30 respondents who have used these offers, which is a surprisingly low number. The Figures 1 and 2 show the completed internship, work activity aimed at study subject as well as the specializations of the completed professional work internships.

From the answers of the respondents who have completed a professional work placement, there was created an overview, in which the segments of internship were implemented. The highest proportion of internships was realized in the segment of Finance and the State Administration 39%, followed by the internships undertaken abroad, mainly in the framework of the Erasmus program, the internship that can include either study or associate degree and professional experience. 7% of the respondents completed an internship in the marketing and trading segment, 7% in the field of the information and communication technologies.

The results show that even though the majority of respondents came from the Mendel University, the former Agricultural and Forestry University, only 4% of graduates decided during their professional work internships to chose the agricultural sector. This number can prove either the irrationality of the choice (because the agricultural sector can offer a career application in both categories, to establish the own enterprise or to work as an employee, or the low popularity of the agricultural segment among the graduates in general. The reasons for the lack popularity of the agricultural sector and its factors would be an interesting theme for a further research.

In determining whether the achieved professional knowledge and skills expressed by the study average, have the impact on obtaining an employment, there responded positively only 6 respondents (4%), 49 respondents did not respond (33%) and 95 respondents (63%) said that the quality of expertise had no effect on their employment. The results show that although the employers prefer candidates with university education, the verification of the quality, the depth of the knowledge, skills and competencies of the candidates is left solely to the university.

This issue was further clarified by the information regarding the impact of the studied specialization on obtaining an employment. The effect of the specialization was confirmed by 41 respondents (27%), 62 respondents or 42% did not state any effect, and 47 respondents (31%) left this question with no answers. We can conclude from the answers that the employers fully trust the universities in the case of the professional quality of the graduates and focus more on the fact that the prospective applicants have graduated from a university or faculty, than on the detailed content of the specialization. In the comments that the respondents mentioned, there has been often said that the employers required graduating in the economic field – economic and management education, and if the graduates correspond to this demand,

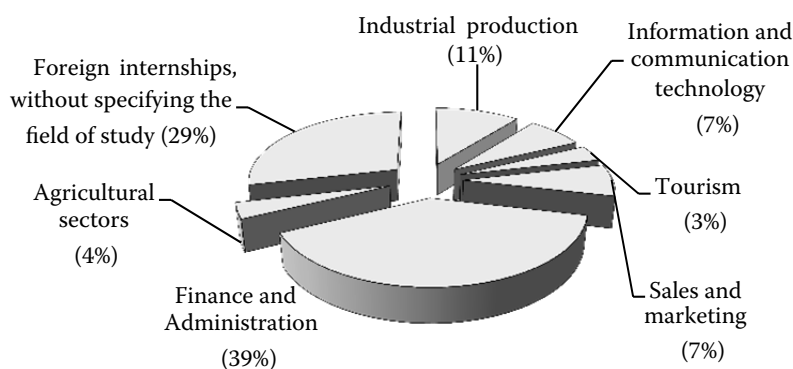


Figure 2. Specializations of the completed professional work internships

Source: own data from processing the survey

no detailed specifications have been determined by the employer.

On the question about the use of the institutional support and assistance in obtaining employment, the respondents most often (38%) answered to have found a job on their own, mostly by searching the on-line offers and advertising, the second most frequently mentioned category (19%) was the help of the families, friends etc. The offer of employment arising from the previous work experience was reported by 6% of the respondents, the support from the university or from other programs assisting graduates in obtaining employment was mentioned by 3% of respondents, and only 1% of the respondents indicated support of the Labour Office. 32% of respondents did not respond to this question. Here there can be seen a very low usage of the institutional support from the answers, which could result from a low awareness of the respondents about the possibilities or a low confidence in the effectiveness of these options.

The building and use of professional networking was represented by 19%, mainly within the range of the family, friends and acquaintances. This relatively narrow range of networking is, due to the graduate age of the respondents, quite logical, the space for the establishing broader relationships within professional structures will arise from the future business contacts and experience. The detailed review of the time after which the respondents sought an employment is in Figure 3.

To the question focused on the time length during which the respondents looked for an employment, 38% of the respondents answered that they already had work secured before the final state examinations, 16% of them have found an application within two months, 5% of the respondents in 4 months, 4% in six months. High values (12%) were found in the answers

“I still could not find any work”, which corresponds to the average unemployment rate in the population, the answer “Other reasons” was found in 19%. This response is represented in the following chart.

Regarding the responses characterizing the “Other reasons”, there was most frequently mentioned the reason of “continuing studies” in 69%, which is logical regarding the large number of bachelors in the sample, and it can also be assumed that some of the students will continue in PhD studies. 7% of the respondents did not take up the employment because of the duration of the internships and practice, 3% due to the maternity leave, 7% accepted a job in a completely different field than they studied. 14% of the respondents did not look for the work at all.

Subjective ratings of the difficulty in finding employment were very optimistic, as 104, i.e. 21% of the respondents said they found employment quite easily, 41% as fairly easily. On the contrary, to find employment became very difficult for 8% of the respondents, and 19% of respondents evaluated as quite difficult. 11% of respondents expressed that they could not evaluate the level of difficulty. The specific reasons which led the respondents for that assessment were identified subsequently in the related open question. To simplify the responses, they were divided into two categories, connecting answers very and quite difficult and the answers completely and fairly easy. The most commonly reported factors that influenced the rating were the experience in the specialization and the previous work experience, language skills, networking and the offered job vacancies in the field. For the specific reasons regarding the evaluation of difficulty in finding employment, there can serve Table 2.

The first pair of the test questions were questions No. 12 (Do you work in the field for which you

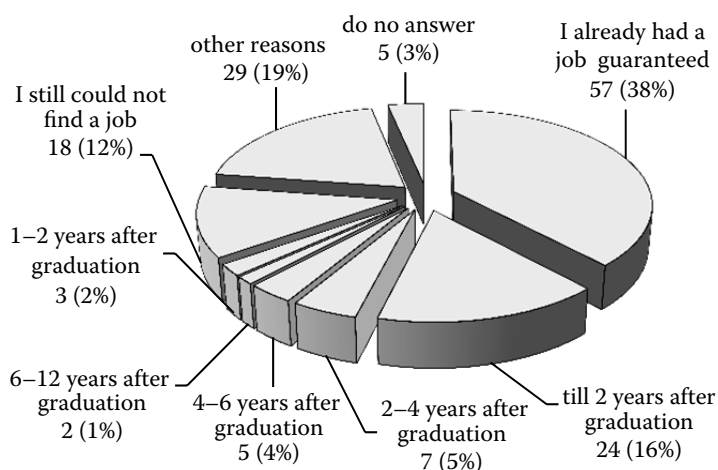


Figure 3. Time after which the respondents sought an employment

Source: own data from processing the survey

Table 2. Specific reasons for the evaluation of difficulty in finding employment

Negative rating – difficult	Positive rating – easy
Lack of experience in the field of specialization	Prior work experience, practise during study
The lack of language knowledge	Use of networking , support of contacts
Lack of job opportunities in the field of specialization	Sufficient supply of jobs in the field of specialization

Source: own data from processing of the survey

studied?) and No. 13 (Was it difficult to get a job after graduation?). As stated in the methodology, testing was carried out using the chi-square test of independence between the work in the field and the difficulty of finding work. The level of significance and the dependence or independence was chosen at 5%, on the basis of p -value $p = 0.001$ it was decided when independence can be rejected. Therefore, if the respondents do not work in their specialization and in 52% of the cases it appeared to be difficult to get a job after the graduation, while for 48% of them getting a job seemed easy. If the respondents are working in the specialization, 13% said that it was difficult to get a job and 87% of respondents said that getting a job was easy. If the respondents are working in a related field, it was difficult to obtain employment for 43% of the respondents, easy then for 57% of the respondents. The second pair of test questions were Q13 (Did you find it difficult to get a job after the graduation?) and No. 15 (What helped you most in getting a job?). Here, we arrive at the value $p = 0.105$, the independence of these two issues at the 5% level of significance we do not reject. There is thus no correlation between the difficulty of finding work after the graduation and the factors that most helped in obtaining employment to the respondents.

The third pair of test questions were questions No. 12 (Are you working in the field for which you have prepared in the study?) and No. 19 (Does your work position require a university education?). At the 5% significance level, there was calculated $p = 0.003$ and the independence can be rejected. The dependence between these two questions can be acknowledged. Through testing of the contingency tables, it can be deduced that if the respondents do not work in their specialization, their work does not require a university education in 59% of the respondents, while with 41% of respondents, the university education is required. If the respondents indicated that they are working in their specialization, in 79% of their job requires a university education, in 21%

a college degree is not required. Those who work in the related field or focus stated that their jobs are requiring the university education in 67%, 33% of the respondents said that it is not required.

DISCUSSION

The authors believe that the opportunities for the graduates of tertiary education is closely linked with the economic development of the country, the dynamics in the creation of employment opportunities and thus the possibilities of their application, but the individual access to a motivated enforcement cannot be omitted. Although the graduates of tertiary education have better opportunities to improve their career in the labour market than the other forms of education, and the unemployment rate of university graduates is the lowest from all other compared categories, as are the primary education, secondary and vocational or extension, they also need to prolong the time needed to find a job (World Bank 2002; Salas-Velasco 2007).

The resulting framework provides that from these five selected factors, the influence on the labour market entry efficiency significantly differs.

The factor limiting possibilities of the future work focus is the choice of the study specialization. The full 60% of the researched respondents have opted to social sciences and humanities, which is the amount that greatly exceeds the absorption opportunities of the labour market. In contrast, the graduates of technical sciences reported minimal problems in obtaining employment and they rated it as easy. A **rational assessment of the future development of in labour market** on the basis of work with the information and data related to the supply and demand of jobs in various fields should prevail over the irrational following the current trends and preferences in the choice of profession. Our findings reveal that analyzing of the labour market situation is very weak and it is very rarely done during the subject of the study decision process. The absence of this basic step in the

decision process consequently leads to the irrational choice, which depends on the personal interest and the individual imagination about the discipline without a realistic assessment of the future opportunities for employment. However this approach can be seen as surprising, according to the expert sources, it is not unique at all. By the Theory of Irrational Behaviour and the Economic Theory which has been published by Gary S. Becker already in February 1962, the rational choice cannot be expected. The science discussion has agreed on the statement that “behavioural economics is not an [alternative] unified theory but is instead a collection of tools or ideas” (Becker 1962; Camerer et al. 2004; Werbel and Balkin 2010; Rulleau and Dachary-Bernard 2012). The Kogan’s empirical analysis focused on the transition from education to the first significant jobs shows that, when it comes to the graduates starting their first significant job, the effect of education has grown, there is a time lag between the expansion of higher education and its effects in the labour market (Kogan 2012).

However, we can support the idea that the system of higher education does not operate on the market principles and the arguments have long been made that even if the access to education deserves subsidization as a basic human right or as a societal good with large positive socio-cultural externalities, the self-correction to the correction made by legal institutions would be beneficial. The labour market is facing a pressure of demand for labour on the social and humanities and a significant lack of trained professionals in the fields of technical disciplines and agriculture. The potential and by the authors recommended governments’ restrictions or limits on the Czech education market correspond to the statement of Plümper and Schneider (2007) that “... higher education policies provide an attractive policy instrument for the governments in fighting high unemployment. The governments may reduce the pressure on the labour market by increasing the number of students.”

The quality application of the tertiary education graduates contributes, beyond the quality and the relevance of higher education, in particular to their individual approach **to gain practical experiences – work readiness** in the field of study. Of these researched factors that affect the success of the graduates in finding a successful adaptation in the labour market, the greatest emphasis is on the experience in the field.

The research illustrated the activity of students at gaining work experience during the course of study

in 69% of the respondents, but unfortunately it is mostly “the financial income generating” than the willingness to gain a professional experience in the field they studied in 20%, which we find low. Although an income increase is very attractive for students, the recommendations arising from this research clearly point to the preferences of internships and experience in the field, although they are less financially attractive, just because for the unique opportunity to gain a competitive advantage in the labour market.

The efficiency of the factor of getting professional practice, although the research was not focused on its quantification, is demonstrably the highest. The results of testing the chi-square test of independence between the work in the specialization and the difficulty of getting work has shown that at 5% level of significance and value of $p = 0.001$, that if the respondents work in a related field, then it was difficult to obtain employment for 43% of the respondents, and then easy for 57% of the respondents. The employers prefer applicants who have acquired during their studies not only a theoretical knowledge but also an experience in the field, internships, and work experience. A situation when the students gained experience in the company where they wanted to work after the graduation is advantageous for both parties. This situation gives the employers an assurance regarding the quality, knowledge and skills of student-job-seekers on the one hand, and the graduate – candidate has secured employment in the labour market and a sufficient experience in the field.

The results documenting the present trend of massification of the university education do not **prove the factor of competencies**, the acquired expertise and skills indeed. The total 63% of the respondents indicated that their knowledge and skills gained through the study had no weight in the process of getting a job. Importance was put on the factor of the completed higher education, not its quality or the depth of knowledge. By the research, the employers do not consider them as important; despite the risk that the competences of the candidate may not correspond to the needed profession. The exception is the language skills that are considered for granted. If they graduates do not have language skills, this become a factor negatively influencing the exercise options. In opposite to our findings, Azevedo, Apfelthaler and Hurst are seeing the main reason for the perceived lack of the graduate employability as rooted in level of the mismatch between the skills acquired in the higher education versus those required for the employment of the individual (Azevedo et al. 2012)

The factor **utilization of institutional support** is, according to the research, used just very little. Only 3% of the respondents reported any utilization of the university or the intutional programs and assistance in obtaining employment. Only 1% of the respondents utilized the support of the Labour Office. The question is whether such minimum utilization stems from the ignorance, distrust or from the complicated access to such programs. In this area, there are evident reserves, the use of which would increase the chances of the graduates to locate and obtain a suitable employment. Government policies and programs which improve the information flow between the labour market and the institutional supply-side would likely lead to welfare gains (Bardhan et al. 2013). In contrast, the utilization of **networking** is indicated in 19%, even in the category of graduates where very likely it is rather the use of family ties and friendships, than actually building and maintaining of professional contacts. Given the age of the respondents and their social status (student, graduate), it can be assumed that professional contacts will only be constructed in future. As it has been written “It is not what you know, but who you know“, the job seeker might learn from his/her contacts about a job opportunity that might not be known through formal methods or that provides a better match for the graduates’ skills (McDonald 2011). Contacts might also provide the information about a particular firm’s hiring process, enabling the graduate to apply at the right time or to submit a more appropriate application (Obukova and Lan 2013). It could be expected that if people benefit from using contacts, then the graduates with more social capital should be more successful in the job seeking process than the graduates with less social capital.

While it seems intuitively plausible that the job-seekers benefit from contacts, the literature is plagued by the theoretical disagreement and inconclusive empirical evidence (Mouw 2006; Obukhova and Lan 2013). McDonald finds the evidence that individuals with more occupation-specific social capital are more likely to engage in search through contacts, in brief, that the individuals working in a particular occupation acquire the occupation-specific social capital. Specifically, he shows that for men, but not for women, a longer experience in the same occupation increases the likelihood that a person finds his job through the informal means (McDonald 2011). Yorke and Harvey summarized a revised student support within four broad areas of activity: the embedded attribute development opportunities within study programmes; the provision of enhanced or revised

student support (i.e. the activities usually provided by career services); the opportunities to gain work experience (within study programmes or external to them); the opportunities to engage in ‘enabled reflection’ and/or recording of experiences, the attribute development and achievement (e.g. via the development of ‘progress files’ and the career management programs) (Yorke and Harvey 2005). The individual studies results are inconsistent in the question of whether the job-seekers with more social capital are more likely to search through the contacts and then more successful in the labour market. Despite the high potential for a more detailed and precise processing of this single topic, it is marked as not the exact aim of this research.

The Knight and Yorke prefer approach to the perceived employability as a multi-faceted characteristic of the individual, defining it as a set of achievements – skills, understanding, and personal attributes – that makes the graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations. They also proposed four main competence areas to deal with the specific content of graduate employability, the USEM model, where they set the understanding, skilfulness, efficacy beliefs and metacognition, including one’s own competencies and limitations and insight into how to learn and develop one’s capabilities (Knight and Yorke 2008).

On the other point of view, in spite of a growing focus on ‘key skills’, many researchers have suggested that the graduate employability is a complex and difficult to precisely define and measure concept (Anrews and Higson 2008).

The authors of papers see the potential of the graduates support in their employment into the highly competitive labour market connected to the responsible personal approach which can be divided to three factors:

- (1) The rational choice of the field of study, based on the labour market current information and trends
- (2) To generate and continually develop their work readiness based on gaining work experiences
- (3) To create and foster their own networks and career management skills.

CONCLUSION

The employment of tertiary graduates becomes a topic for a widely spread discussion, held not only in the academic and education sector in the Czech Republic. The main responsibility is dedicated to the government

institution, mainly to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. However, there also exists the sphere of personal abilities and skills of the graduates, which could provide them with the potential of competitive advantage during the process of the school-work transition.

The graduates personal approach and development of the above mentioned three factors can provide the graduates with success in the competitive struggle.

Educational institutions provide students with the maximum breadth and depth of the theoretical knowledge, they organize and send students for the internships, allow them to participate in many research projects, but not all the efforts of these institutions help students to find a good work position in practice, if the student does not have a proactive approach and does not use these options. The above research offers recommendations on what factors to look and by what form to use them, with the goal to ensure an effective transition of the graduates into the workforce.

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