

Preparing University Students of English Department for the Kosovo Labor Market: A Case Study Conducted at the University of Prishtina

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Abstract: - This research aims to examine whether graduates of English Department and Literature in Faculty of Philology at University of Prishtina are prepared to enter the labor market and if their higher education preparation meets the requirements of employment. Moreover, this study will try to analyze if there are job skills built and implemented specifically in this department, and what skills are students mostly being taught in this institution. This paper analyzes and interprets the results, by backing up the arguments with factual sources to answer the two broad questions of the study. The findings reveal that while there is a certain level of job skills implementation, particularly in teamwork, research, and critical-thinking skills, there is room for improvement and a need for greater incorporation of employability skills. Most English graduates feel sufficiently prepared for the labor market, but a minority attribute their lack of readiness to the insufficient implementation of job skills. Communication skills, practical skills, leadership skills, critical-thinking skills, and problem-solving skills were identified as areas where students desired higher implementation. The study suggests that additional preparation and training are necessary for English graduates to meet the requirements of the labor market and feel confident before entering employment.

Keywords: employability, graduate, skills, university, education, job, labor market

I. Introduction

Education is the way to a successful career which provides the opportunity to be a productive individual of a civilized society by acquiring all the necessary skills. It determines the quality of life and improves one's knowledge and skills. Being able to enter the labor market and to have a successful career, is the key purpose of education and professional advancement. Young people attend universities and select their degrees hoping that they will be successful in their future employment (Robst, 2007) and prepared with the needed skills that are required to be part of the labor market.

One of the most important set of skills that are known to be highly needed and required for employment are job skills. Students throughout their education should be provided with job skills in order for them to be prepared for the enrollment and other job selection processes which are set up by employers (Greenbank, 2014). Considering the benefits of job skills acquisition, the implementation of them in education is a necessity. Employers are seeking for job skills as, time-management, self-understanding, teamwork, problem-solving and decision-making skills, working with diversity, risk assessment management, practical skills etc., (Weligamage & Seingthai, 2003) so are higher institutions actually providing graduates with these skills?!

This research will analyze the implementation of job skills in English Department and Literature in Faculty of Philology – University of Prishtina and two other branch locations in University of Prizren and University of Gjakova which have the English Departments as part of their studying programs. The current study will try to answer two broad research questions, how prepared are English Department graduates to enter the labor market and which job skills, if any, are being taught and implemented in this institution.

English Language and Literature Program in University of Prishtina is considered the leader in Kosovo and a program from which also private colleges of our country get the ideas of their programs and the overall curricula. As a result, if the implementation of job skills in this university may or may not be appropriate, the same issues could affect also private colleges.

Based on personal experiences, in English Department and Literature in UP, there is a lack of students' preparation to enter the labor market and a research is needed to examine this important issue furthermore. The graduates of English Department, as the participants of this survey, will be the target group chosen for this study and with their help the information that is conducted will be presented in the research.

It is hypothesized that there is a lack of students' job skills preparation to enter the labor market in English and Literature Department in University of Prishtina and that the English graduates in English Department in UP need extra preparation and trainings to fulfill

labor market's requirements.

Considering the fact that Kosova is in an ongoing development, this research can play an important role in addressing the issue of job skills implementation in English Language and Literature Department and the impact it has in its students.

II. Literature Review

The graduate labor market has become very competitive in this modernized world, therefore students must be willing to enhance job skills such as leadership, the ability to work in a team, decision-making skills etc. Often skills that are offered in higher education are different from those that should be adopted in their workplace.

Consequently, students throughout their education should be provided with appropriate job skills in order for them to be prepared for the enrollment and other job selection processes which are set up by employers (Greenbank, 2014). Employers are seeking for job skills, the set of essential skills, knowledge, abilities and traits that are necessary to be successful in the workplace (Patascil F., & Tablatin S.L., 2014), as time-management, self-understanding, teamwork, problem-solving and decision-making skills, working with diversity, risk assessment management, practical skills etc., (Weligamage & Seingthai, 2003), that are needed and required in every kind of job.

The connection between education and the job market is getting more and more interest among rule-makers, in regards to the improvement of the academic curriculum. As a result of this, the main goal of universities nowadays is the advancement of their students to increase their future job opportunities. So, the cooperation between specialists and the answering of job market requirements is fundamental (Kottmann & Weert, 2013) in order for students to be provided with employability skills which are crucial to progress in their professional aspect and their future careers.

According to Sakel & Treffers-Daller (2010), "understanding graduate employability is of vital importance for higher education. This is particularly important for the Humanities, as students from these areas are less often in employment six months after graduation than students from more vocational degrees. Final year students are very concerned about their chances on the job market. According to a survey among 16,000 final year students (High Fliers Research Limited, 2010), students' confidence in the graduate employment market is now at its lowest for fifteen years, and only a third of the final year students are confident that they will find a graduate job after university" (p. 1).

Most of the graduating students feel like they are not sufficiently prepared to enter the labor market. They need assistance and guidance when they enter the workplace, and that is how they understand that they lack these "life" skills as problem-solving, critical thinking and decision making. (Are students prepared for the workplace?) Therefore, advancement of undergraduates from theory to practice is the current need, because practice will increase the ability to be professionally prepared for a job (Greenbank, 2014) and will make them capable to apply and relate theory into real effective work.

Furthermore, higher education institutions should stimulate students to make decisions in regards to their careers and the way how they are going to progress their attributes and the abilities that they might need for employment. Also, universities can help students and assist them in their choices by offering volunteering jobs or by organizing different activities. (Greenbank, 2014). As a result, recently there has been shown a significant importance on job related trainings for students as part of their university curriculum. During these trainings they get the chance to experience working atmosphere and to comprehend work characteristics within a company (Weligamage, 2014) which also helps them in developing the needed job skills to fulfill the employers' needs in the labor market.

According to Kottmann and Weert (2013), "obtaining a diploma (qualification) is more than ever before a prerequisite in finding a place on the labour market" (p. 7). Comparing the educational levels, the chances of being unemployed are much higher for those with lower education than those with higher level of education.

Especially, professionals who contain a Bachelor degree have a solid position on the labor market, followed by those who obtain a Master degrees. (Kottmann & Weert, 2013)

This gives students a chance to make connections between the programs they decide to study and job market opportunities.

Higher education institutions should recognize the needs of employers' in order for them to reinforce their graduates' skills (Weligamage, 2014).

However, as stated by Khatibi et al. (2015) employability depends also from the graduates' personal traits as knowledge, experience, abilities but also on the attributes of the university as the curricula and the system or methodology used in the institution, as well as on the employers who employ the graduates and what they expect from them. So, there are many factors that impact the successfulness of a job seeker in getting an appropriate job in the labor market.

Furthermore, according to Harvey (2000), getting a degree may not guarantee to get a job and it should be seen as a key that helps you to exceed a certain point in the enrollment process. Therefore, graduates attributes and skills are essential in the recruitment procedures and the following job processes. Based on employers' needs, in order for an employee to be successful at their workplace they must evolve a range of qualities and features since most of the time employers want and need people who are able to communicate, to work in groups, to be willing to learn new things, take risks and figure things out. (Harvey, 2000)

So, all of these characteristics are very important for graduates to enter the job environment and to get used with the work culture as well as to advance their ideas and thoughts in that atmosphere.

2.1. Employers' perspective regarding graduates' preparation in entering the labor market

Higher education is strongly connected with the labor market, therefore meeting the demands of the labor market has become the main goal of higher education institutions.

However, except the educational background, students need academic skills and abilities to use them in their workplaces in order to be adequately prepared in their careers. One of the key factors that impact the improvement of employability are higher education institutions, which have the authority and responsibility to recognize how they can improve job skills of their future employees (Weligamage, 2014).

Therefore, improving job skills of the graduates is considered as an important task inside any university of the world. Most of the time universities conduct surveys about employers' needs, in order for them to identify specific employer requirements (Weligamage, 2014) so this way they have the chance to give answers based on what they seek in their new employees.

As cited in Weligamage (2014), based on a survey conducted by University of Guelph in Canada, the most common skills that are expected from new employees are: time management which defines the skills to control and to operate different tasks at the same time and to divide time efficiently in order to meet numerous deadlines; leadership skills which contain the ability to lead, guide and motivate others; teamwork skills – the skills of working as part of a team; problem solving skills contain the ability to recognize and resolve problems; and self-understanding skills which include the ability to understand individual attributes. (Weligamage, 2014) - Generic Attributes of Graduates of the University of Sydney (1997)

Furthermore, based on employers' perspective, graduates are more oriented towards academic skills rather than real life skills, so mostly they lack in practice. Their preference is to hire people with both academic preparation and job skills, which implies a better outlook for graduates' future employment. It is suggested that university curricula should involve more opportunities to consolidate classroom activities with real working atmosphere in order to decrease the difference between theory and practice and to include more job skills as group work, leadership skills and other individual advancement skills. (Weligamage, 2014).

These changes could be more efficient in regards to the preparation of graduates to be part of a workplace in their future careers. Therefore, as stated by Weligamage (2014), "it is recommended that undergraduate curricular in management should include more opportunities to integrate class-room instructions with actual working environment. While this will reduce the gap between theory and experience, potential employers should be made aware of the nature of opportunities available to the students as a part of their curriculum to enhance team work and presentation skills and other personal development activities" (p. 119).

Employers are searching for people who are courageous and open, who are not only committed to work and engaged with the staff but also with the customers. Therefore, graduates are expected to have these features in order for them to be employable in the labor market. (Selvadurai et al., 2012)

But, all these skills and abilities are supposed to get developed through graduates' studying time thus as stated in Weligamage (2014), there is a need to match the requirements of the labor market with the skills of university graduates in order for them to be successful in their careers. As a result, it is an immediate need of recognizing the employers' point of view in regards to the abilities that a graduate should have to be potentially ready to be employable compared with professional qualification holders (Weligamage, 2014).

2.2. Labor market and graduates' employability in Kosova

Kosova is a country in transition and it is still facing many challenges in its economy and overall development. Certainly, the economic situation of a country is massively affected by the actions and processes that take place in the labor market (Halili, 2016), so even in Kosova's case, its economy has an immense effect on other labor market processes. Kosova has a very young population, according to GAP Institute (2017), approximately 70% of Kosova's population are under the age of 30 and about 50% are under the age of 25. This gives our country the advantage of having a higher number of labor force but as stated by Halili (2016), due to the fact that Kosova does not have a strong economy and it has a deficient labor market, it does not ensure job opportunities for its young people consequently it leads to high rates of unemployment.

Having the right skills and abilities to be in charge of a job position, comes a result of the combination of one’s education and work skills that are empowered through one’s job experience (GAP Institute, 2017). However, finding a good job after graduation remains a big challenge for graduates because most of them end up getting a job that is not secure and has a low salary which does not cover their life expenses (Yu, 2017) and even in Kosova this occurs as a result of having a very high rate of unemployment among its young population.

Regarding Kosova’s context, based on an analysis of private and service sectors done in regards to the preparation of students to enter the labor market, it results that educational programs in Kosova do not provide highly qualified and needed staff in service sectors and therefore they recommend curricula’s development in line with the labor market requirements (GAP Institute, 2017). This would improve the overall situation in regards to graduates’ entering the labor market and would impact positively the process of recruitment.

Also based on GAP Institute’s research, from 92% of the companies that have employed staff for the last 3 years, 82.1% of them have encountered difficulties to find qualified people. Moreover, based on this result and many more that will be shared on the study, they support the idea that higher educational institution in Kosova do not implement employability skills that are needed to enter the labor market.

Furthermore, based on the results of Labor Force Survey (2019), an annual survey from the Government of Kosovo which provide statistical data regarding labor market, these are some of the results of their latest study:

- Nearly two thirds of Kosova’s population is of working age (15-64) and it is supposed to be increased over the next few years since Kosova is one of the countries with the youngest people in Europe
- Kosova’s young population has a very high rate of unemployment 49.1% whereas unemployment among females is higher (57.6%) compared to males (44.8%)
- The labor force participation rate of women is much lower, it is only 14.2 %, compared with 47.0 % for males whereas in regards to young people between the ages of 15-24 in the labor force, 49.1% of them are unemployed.

The reasons for this difference between genders is due to women who decide to take care of their families which affects their availability in the job aspect.

All these factors, and many more that will be further elaborated in this study, impact in one way or another Kosova’s labor market, the employability of young people and of course the economy growth as a whole.

Table 1: Classification of the labor market for the population of Kosova (Labor Force Survey, Q4 2019)

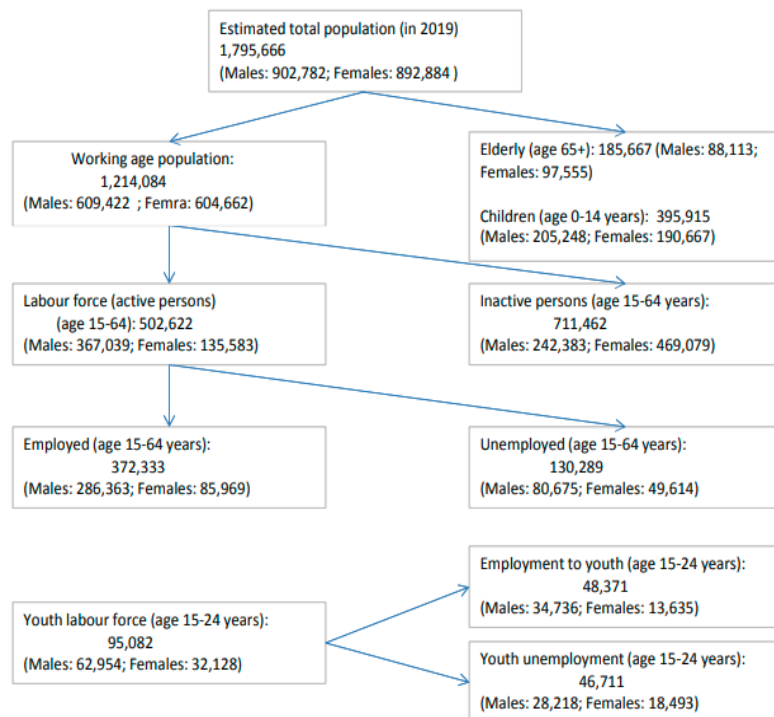


Table 2: Key indicators of the labor market (Labor Force Survey, Q4 2019)

Key indicators of the labor market (%)	Male	Female	Total
Rate of participation in labor force	60.2	22.4	41.4
Inactivity rate	39.8	77.6	58.6
Employment to population ratio (employment rate)	47.0	14.2	30.7
Unemployment rate	22.0	36.6	25.9
Unemployment rate among young people (15-24 years of age)	44.8	57.6	49.1
Percentage of young people NEET youth population (15-24 years of age)	33.0	35.4	34.1
Percentage of unstable employment to total employment	21.6	12.7	19.5

2.2.1. Employment and unemployment by gender in Kosova

Regarding the comparison of employment rate between genders, 47.0% of males were employed meanwhile only 14.2% of females of working age were employed. Compared with the same survey that was done in 2018, there has been an increase in the employment rate by 1.9% to males and 1.5% to females. Labor Survey Force (2018)

According to this survey, the employment rate for females of the age 25-54 varies from 14,4% to 20.7%, in the age group 25-34, the rate is 18.0% , and the group of young females from 15-24 were only 8.6%. Whereas for males, the rate was the highest for the group age of 45 to 54, it was 63.9%, whereas the group age of 35 to 44 had the rate of 62.9%. Also, the group age of young people from 15 to 24 was 19.4%, which is still more compared to the young group of females.

Table 2: Employment rate by gender (Labor Force Survey, Q4 2019)

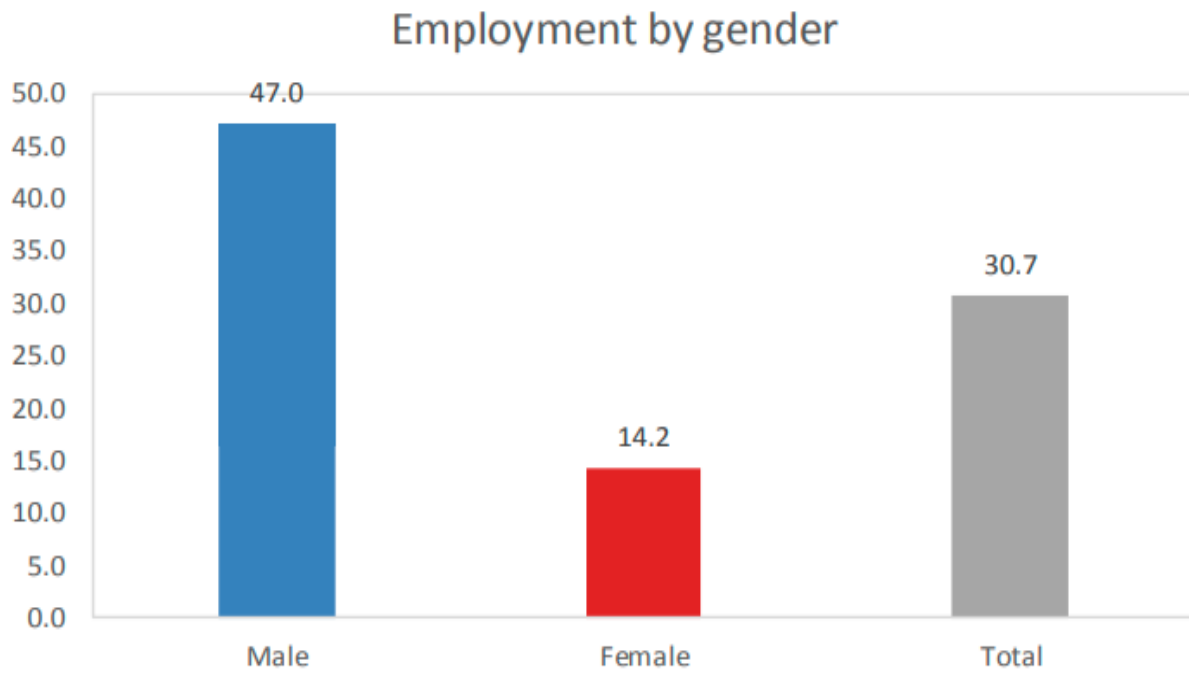
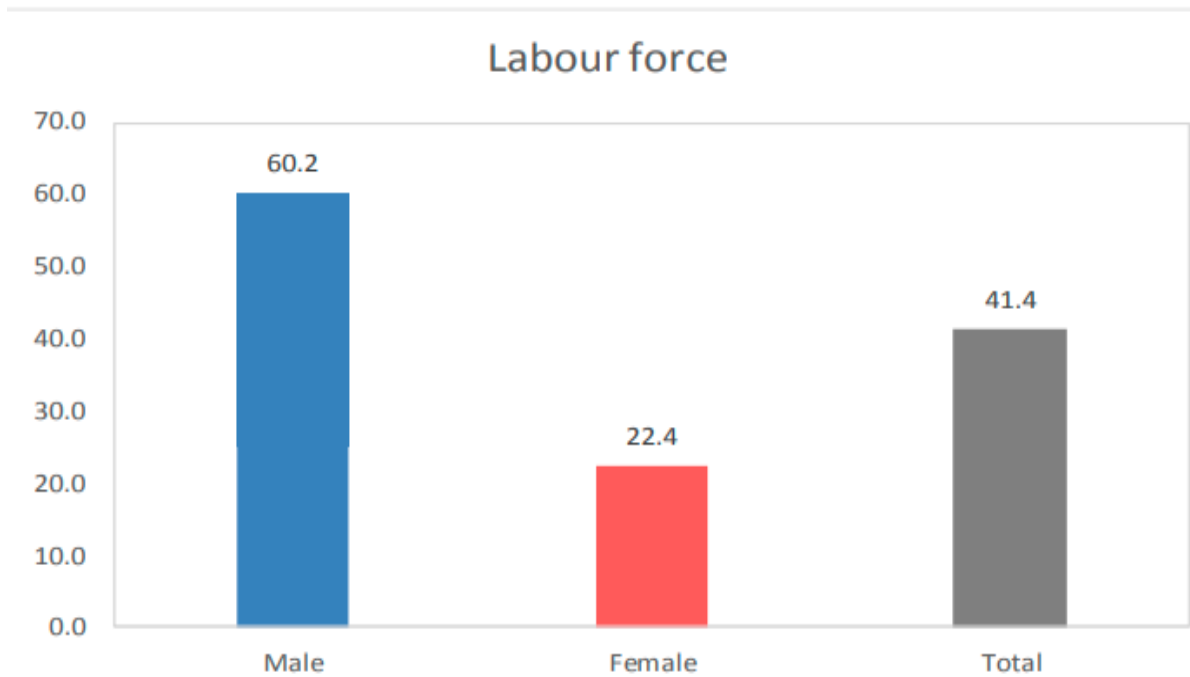


Table 3. Participation rate of both genders in the labor force



This table describes the participation of females in the labor market which is so much lower (22.4%) compared to men (60.2%).

Furthermore, according to LFS (2019) in 2019 unemployment rate was 25.9%, the highest percentage to females by 36.6% than men by 22.0%. Unfortunately, even in the last part of 2019, there was an increase in the overall unemployment rate in Kosova, to males 1,8% whereas to females there was an increase by 0.2%.

Tables below (4,5,6) will demonstrate the information that was presented.

Table 4. Unemployment rate by gender (LFS, 2019)

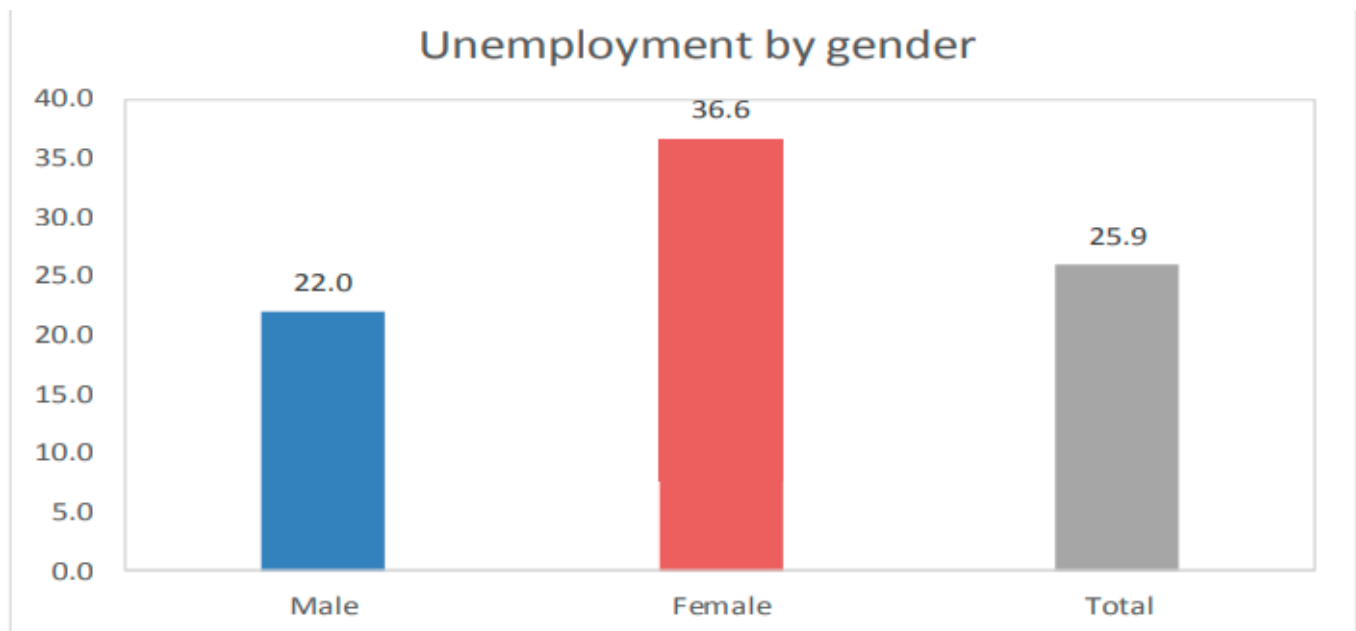


Table 5. Number of unemployment rate by gender (LFS, 2019)

Kosovo	Male	Female	Total
UNEMPLOYMENT (IN THOUSAND)			
15-64	80.7	49.6	130.3
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (%)			
15-64	22.0	36.6	25.9

Table 6. Unemployment rate by gender and age group (LFS, 2019)

Kosovo	Male	Female	Total
UNEMPLOYMENT (IN THOUSAND)			
15-24	28.2	18.5	46.7
25-34	25.3	19.3	44.6
35-44	14.0	7.2	21.2
45-54	10.3	4.5	14.8
55-64	2.8	0.1	3.0
15-64	80.7	49.6	130.3
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (%)			
15-24	44.8	57.6	49.1
25-34	25.5	46.6	31.7
35-44	18.5	23.6	19.9
45-54	13.2	20.9	14.9
55-64	5.5	1.4	4.8
15-64	22.0	36.6	25.9

Moreover, according to LFS (2019), despite the fact that Kosovo has a low level of employment, 18.8 % of employed people worked in unstable jobs, which means that they are either self-employed people without employees or people who are part of family business and do not get any payment while working there.

These kind of employees are likely lower to have a formal work contract compared to workers with a salary.

Table 7. Unstable employment by gender (LFS, 2019)

Kosovo	
UNSTABLE EMPLOYMENT (IN THOUSAND)	
Male	56,8
Female	11,5
All	68,4
PERCENTAGE OF UNSTABLE EMPLOYMENT IN TOTAL EMPLOYMENT (%)	
Male	20,3
Female	13,9
All	18,8

Table 8. Unstable employment by occupation and gender (LFS, 2019)

Kosovo	Male	Female	Total
SELF-EMPLOYED WITHOUT OTHER EMPLOYEES (%)			
Legislators, senior officials and managers	7,4	2,1	6,6
Professionals	6,2	4,0	5,9
Technicians and related occupations with them	2,1	0,4	1,8
Clerks	0,4	1,4	0,6
Service and sales workers in shops and markets	22,6	31,9	24,0
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	11,0	4,7	10,0
Craft and related trades workers	14,5	46,9	19,4
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	11,5	0,5	9,9
Elementary occupations	24,3	8,1	21,8
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0
UNPAID FAMILY WORKERS (%)			
Legislators, senior officials and managers	2,2	2,0	2,2
Professionals	1,5	5,1	2,3
Technicians and related occupations with them	1,2	0,0	0,9
Clerks	0,7	5,4	1,7

Moreover, based on the results of Labor Force Survey (2020), for the first quarter of the year, these are some of the statistics and main results that this survey has reported:

- The unemployment rate of young people in Kosovo is very high.
- The rate of unemployment is higher for females (30.6%) compared to males (23.0%).
- “From 38.8% (472,669 persons) of the population that is economically active, 25.0% (117,997 persons) are unemployed” (LFS, 2020, p.12)
- Approximately two thirds of Kosovo’s population is of working age (age 15-64). As a consequence it is expected that this working age to be higher, taking into consideration the fact that Kosovo is one of the countries that has the youngest population in Europe.
- “Nearly one-third (29.0%) of those aged 15 to 24 years in Kosovo were not in education, employment or training (NEET). This figure is 29.1% for young females compared with 29.0% for young males” (LFS, 2020, p.13).
- “Only 39.5 % of employed persons had a permanent contract in their main job, with 10.2% higher in females than males (46.9% to 36.7%), while 60.5% had a temporary contract, with 10.2% higher in males than females. Persons who had temporary contracts were asked why they had this type of contract and 92.0% of respondents reported that there was no other contract available” (LFS, 2020, p.13).

The tables below (Table 9 & 10) represent the overall categorization of the labor market for Kosovo’s population and the key indicators of the labor market based on the gender differences.

Table 9: Classification of the labor market for the population of Kosovo (LFS, 2020)

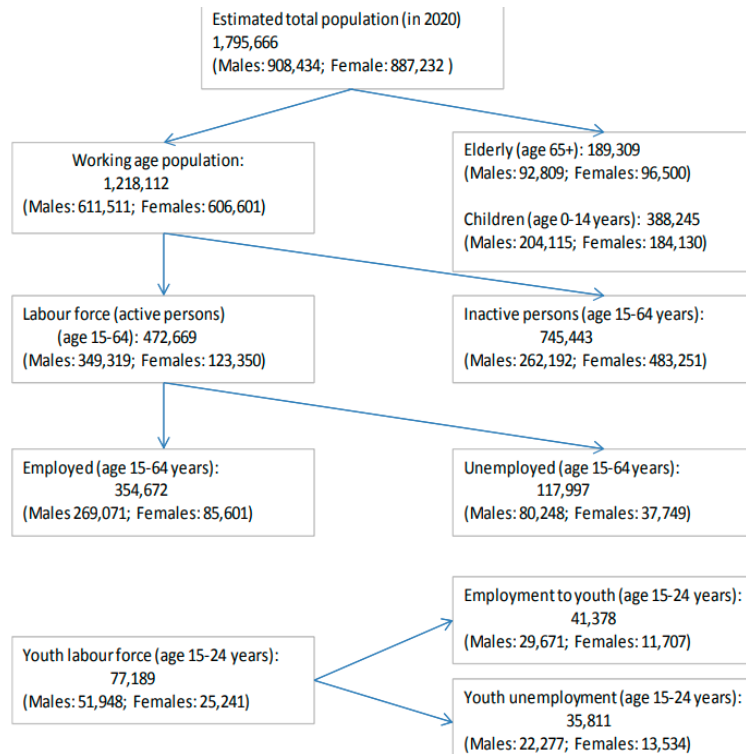


Table 10: Key indicators of the labor market (LFS, 2020)

Key indicators of the labor market (%)	Male	Female	Total
Rate of participation in labor force	57,1	20,3	38,8
Inactivity rate	42,9	79,7	61,2
Employment to population ratio (employment rate)	44,0	14,1	29,1
Unemployment rate	23,0	30,6	25,0
Unemployment rate among young people (15-24 years of age)	42,9	53,6	46,4
Percentage of young people NEET youth population (15-24 years of age)	29,0	29,1	29,0
Percentage of unstable employment to total employment	18,1	11,2	16,5

“In the first quarter of 2020, most of the employees were working in positions of service and sales, as professionals, in elementary occupations and craft workers (Table 1.10).

Almost half of employed females were professional, technical and related occupations with (42.1%), 22.0% were in services and sales and 13.0% in elementary occupations. Males were distributed across sectors, but most were employed in service and sales (25.3%), 10.7% as craft workers and work related, in elementary occupations (22.1%) and 11.9% were professionals” (LFS, 2020,

p.22).

According to Labor Force Survey (2020), about the first quarter of 2020, the influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on labor market data of this period of time, was very low since it was the pandemic start, however the impact of it, is expected to be very serious in the second quarter of the year. Finally, those data have not been published yet!

III. Methodology

This section will elaborate on the detailed process of how this study was conducted and also will indicate the methodologies used for data analysis. Firstly, the profile of the respondents and the number of the participants will be shown. Then, the instruments along with the process of data collection and data analysis will be discussed in specific details.

3.1. Participants

The target group chosen for the study were graduates of the Department of English Language and Literature in University "Hasan Prishtina" in Prishtina, University "Ukshin Hoti" in Prizren and University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova. These three universities were chosen since they are the only universities have their English Programs as part of their faculty departments. As a result, the study will not only focus on strengths and weaknesses of one department's work but on all three departments' work.

The total number of participants were 70, where 44 (62.9%) out of them were graduates of English Department in University of Prishtina, 15 (21.4%) were graduates of English Department in University of Prizren and 11 of them (15.7%) were graduates of English Language – Translation and Interpretation Department in University of Gjakova.

The main reason why only graduates were targeted was because they are at the end of their 4 year studies and based on this fact they have the best insights of this issue. Also, they are expected to enter the labor market in a shorter period of time so it was assumed that they would be the living proof of this topic.

3.2. Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire survey. Questionnaires yield information on what participants perceptions of certain issues are according to their personal previous experiences (Dörnyei, 2007), thus, this was the reason why this instrument was chosen for the research. The questionnaire contains 15 questions. The first section of it includes information about the purpose of the study and its credibility. It preceded with demographic data questions, following with questions in regards to their job experience and trainings related to it, and followed by multiple choice questions that were directly linked to the feelings and thoughts of the participants, to find out how prepared the students really felt to enter the labor market. By the end of the questionnaire, there were 3 open-ended questions where the respondents were able to express their opinions freely in regards to the subjects that helped them the most throughout their studies and the skills that they would like to be more implemented in their department.

3.3. Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed online to all the participants. The reason behind this decision was due to the situation caused from coronavirus - COVID-19, which has led to all universities being closed and not accessible. As a result, it was send online by social media to all the participants and the responses were collected automatically.

The participants were informed beforehand what the purpose of the questionnaire was and how they should fill out the questionnaire. Also, they were told that the filling of the survey was completely anonymous and it would not take more than 3-4 minutes to complete it. Their participation was based on their willingness and their responses would be used for the purposes of this study only. They were instructed to feel free to ask questions for anything they did not understand. Fortunately, all of them were very willing to participate.

Certainly, the fact that the questionnaire was delivered online, it made the whole process a lot easier and faster. Within a short period of time, 70 responses were submitted. The data collection proved to be successful and enabled to move forward with the study's data analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis

Considering the fact that the questionnaire was delivered online, it made the data analysis process a lot easier to examine since the template that was used, summarized all the participants' responses in one page, which were conducted with percentages and with virtualized charts and tables to make it clearer.

The collection of data was done online automatically meanwhile the analysis of them were done by using quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The other method used for the data analysis was codifying open-ended questions, respectively using one word or

phrases to group the answers together (Saldana, 2008). This helped in summarizing the overall high number of responses on open-ended questions. Finally, a deeper analysis was done on each set of questions to conclude the results in the best way possible and to support them with evidence from the literature that has been used.

The responses were analyzed separately for each answer and then joined together as a whole. This gives rise to results being analyzed firstly as in a general context and then the analysis of the universities compared with each other.

IV. Results

The results of this study which were conducted from the study’s questionnaire, will be presented mostly visually by charts and graphs to help the readership to get a better view and to understand them better.

The first part of the questionnaire asked for students’ demographic data (just the gender) and the institution where they were studying.

As mentioned above, the overall number of students that participated in this study was 70.

Based on gender, 80% of the participants were females (56) compared to 20% that were male (14). According to universities, 44 of them (62.9%) were graduates from University of Prishtina, 15 (21.4%) were graduates of English Department in University of Prizren and 11 of them (15.7%) were graduates of English Language – Translation and Interpretation Department in University of Gjakova.

1. The first question of the questionnaire was related to students’ job experience whether they had job experience or no. The difference between students who have work experience (50.7%) and those who do not have work experience (49.3%) is quite low.
2. The second question that followed, “*if students have encountered difficulties in adapting to the workplace*”, was an open-ended question in regards to the students that answered with *Yes* in the first question, meaning that they had work experience. In this question 19 (27.1%) out of the total number of 70 participants responses were collected. Where 10 (52.6%) of them replied that they did NOT encounter any difficulties in the working place, whereas 9 (47.3%) of them said that they encountered difficulties in their workplaces.
3. The aim of the third question was to find out whether students had or did not have trainings before starting their jobs and the result is presented in Figure 2.

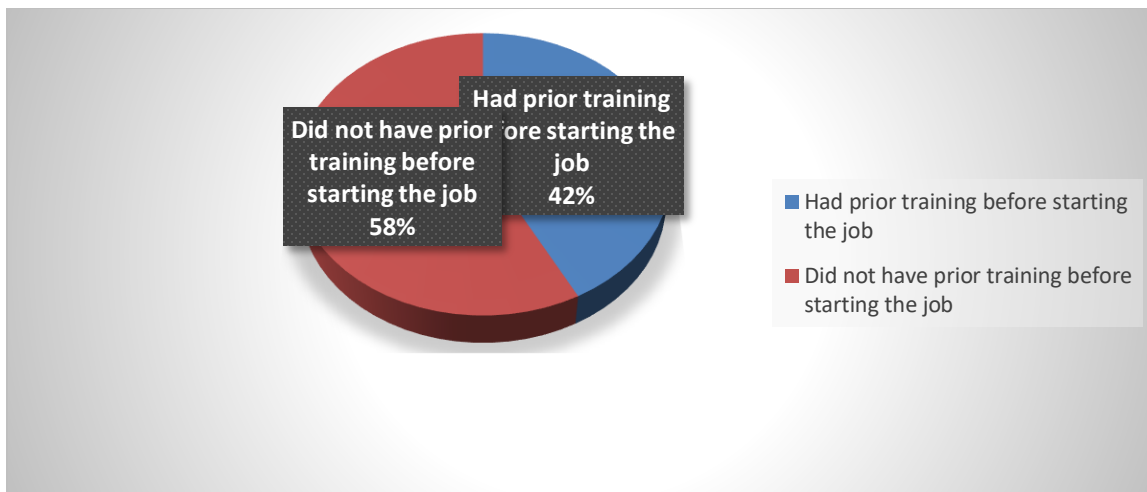


Figure 1. The total percentage of students who had and did not have trainings before starting their job

Figure 2 presents the difference between students who did not have prior trainings before starting their job and those who had trainings before entering their working place. Comparing the results, it can be seen that the number of students who did not have trainings is higher (58%) than the number of students who were trained before starting their job (42%).

4. Regarding the next question “*If you are looking for a job, what are the challenges that you face to find a job?*” the participants had to tick as many factors that they found appropriate for themselves. Figure 3 presents visually the results of this question:

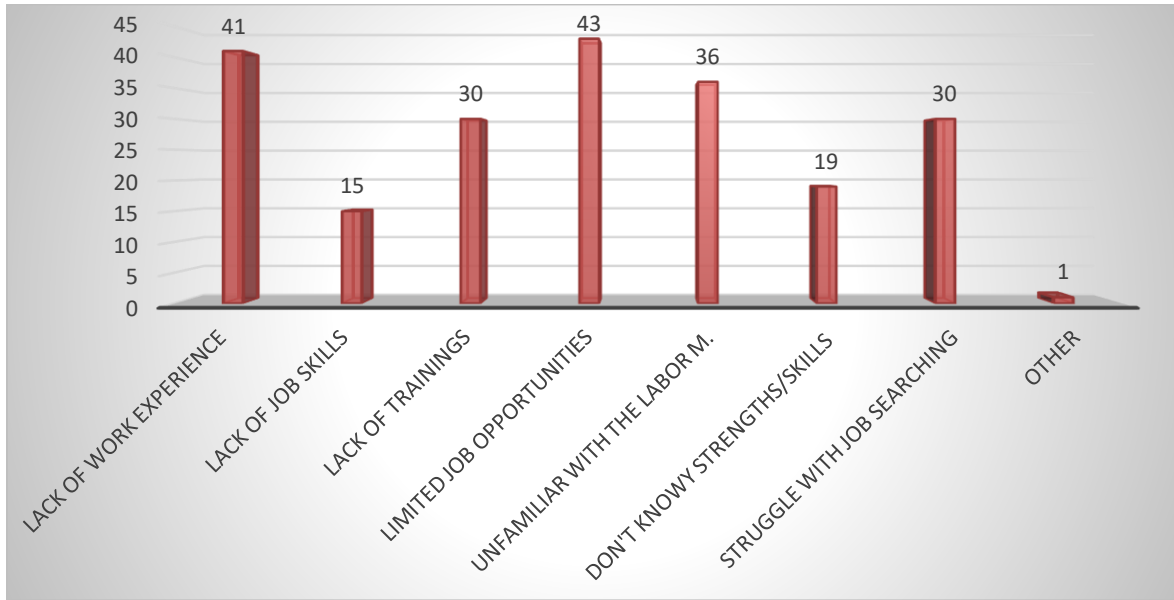


Figure 2. Identification of students' challenges when searching for a job

The factor or the challenge that the majority of respondents have ticked, as it can be seen above, was limited job opportunities (43) followed by lack of work experience (41), being unfamiliar with the labor market (36), lack of trainings (30), struggling with job searching (30), don't know what my skills or strengths are (19) and lack of job skills (15).

5. Furthermore, respondents were supposed to choose *which of the presented skills they have developed through their studies in English Department*, and the graph below demonstrates their answers.

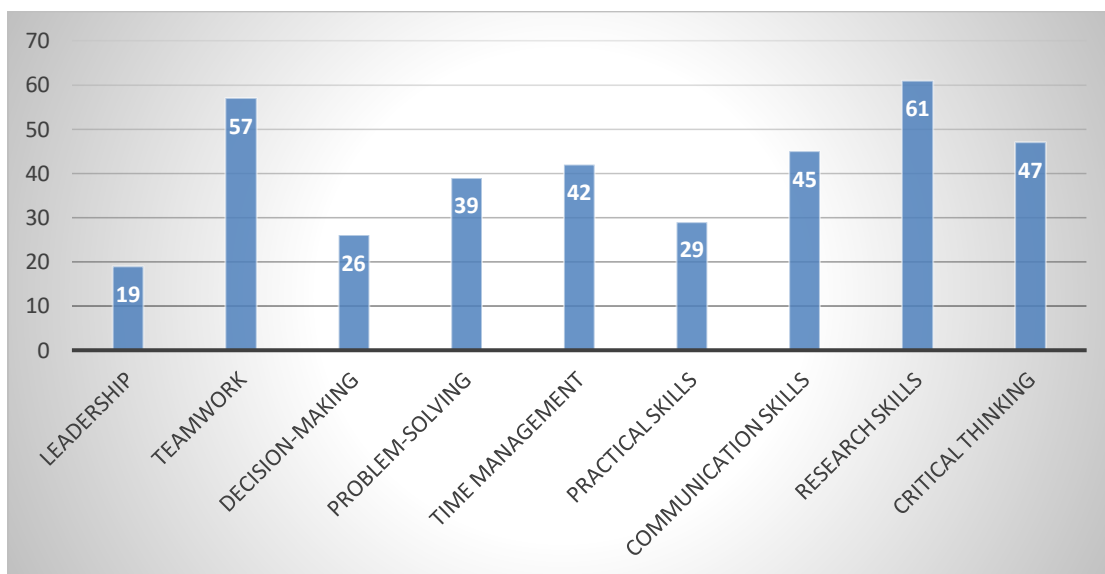


Figure 3. Job skills developed through graduates' studies in English Department

According to the chart, it can be seen that the most developed skills throughout graduates' studies in English Department, are researching skills and teamwork. Followed by critical thinking skills, communication skills, time –management and so on.

6. **How important do you think job skills are for your future careers?** - The total number of respondents (70), gave their opinion in this question where 65 of them (93%) of them consider job skills as very important for their future careers, comparing with a small number of students who consider them somewhat important or not so important.

Figure 5 below presents the results of this question.

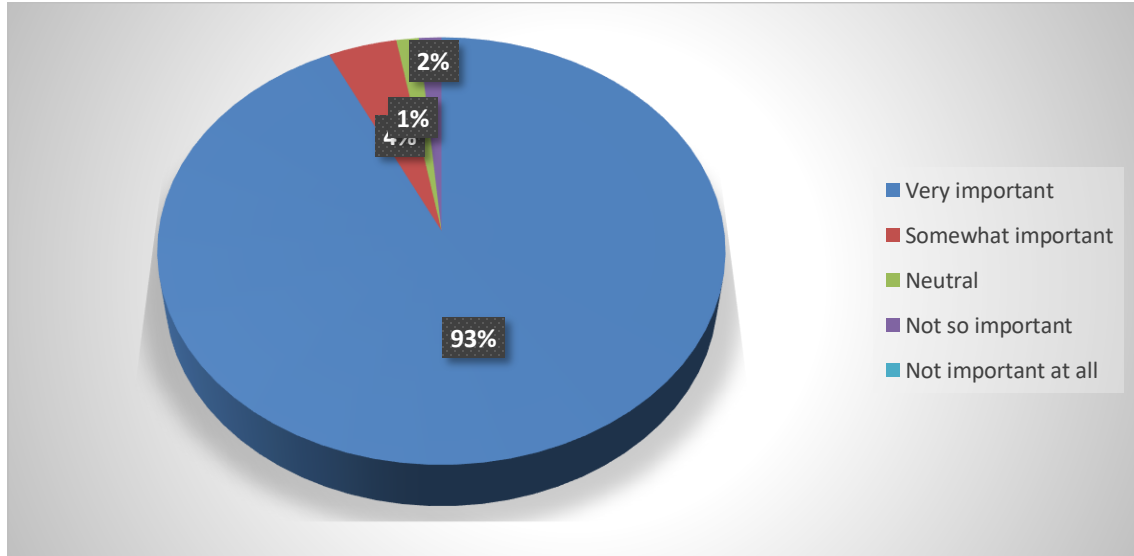


Figure 4. Graduates perceptions regarding the importance of job skills for their careers

7. How satisfied are you with the skills that English Department provided you throughout your studies?

One of the key questions of the questionnaire was to diagnose *graduates satisfaction regarding the skills that English Department developed through their studies.*

As shown in the figure 6, all participants (70) gave their responses and 42 of them (60%) seem to be satisfied with the implementation of specific skills, only 6 of them (8.6%) claim to be very satisfied, whereas 12 of them (17.1%) are dissatisfied with them and 6 or 8.6% of the respondents feel very dissatisfied with the skills they have of have not been taught.

The chart below demonstrates the results of students’ feelings in regards to the job skills implemented in their universities.

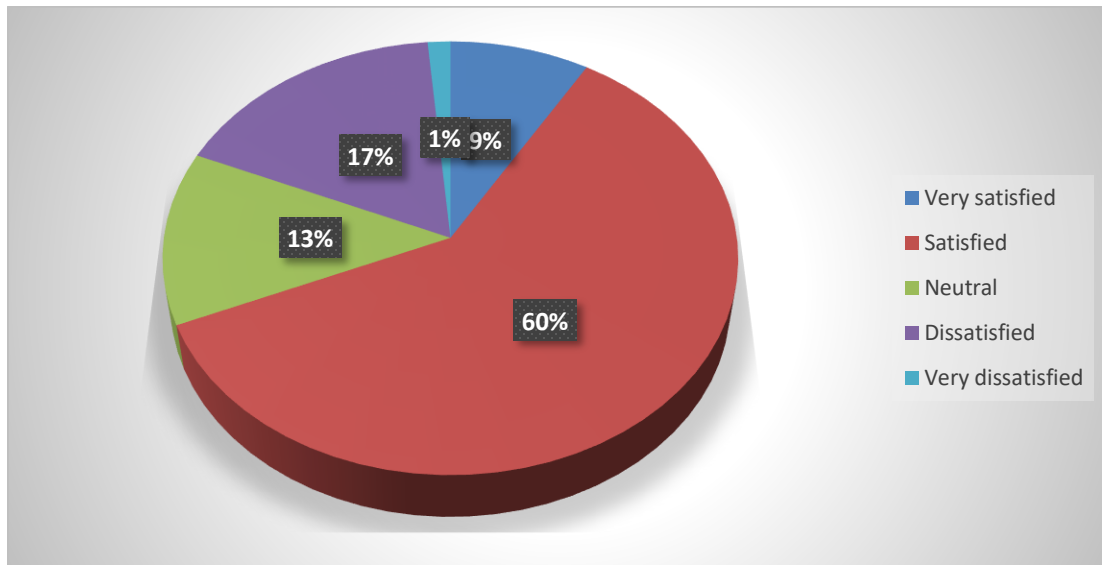


Figure 5. Graduates’ satisfaction regarding the skills that English Department provided them with throughout their studies

8. By the last part of the questionnaire students were asked “To what extent do they agree that English Department in their university has given them adequate preparation for the labor market” and their responses are described in Figure 7.

As it is shown in the results below, the majority of the students (44.3%) agree with the statement that their university gave them the appropriate preparation to enter the job market, only 4.3% of the respondents strongly agree with the aforementioned statement, whereas 30% of them have a neutral attitude towards this fact. Moreover, the results show that 15.7% of them strongly disagree and 7.1% disagree with the fact that university gave them the adequate readiness to be part of the labor market in their future careers.

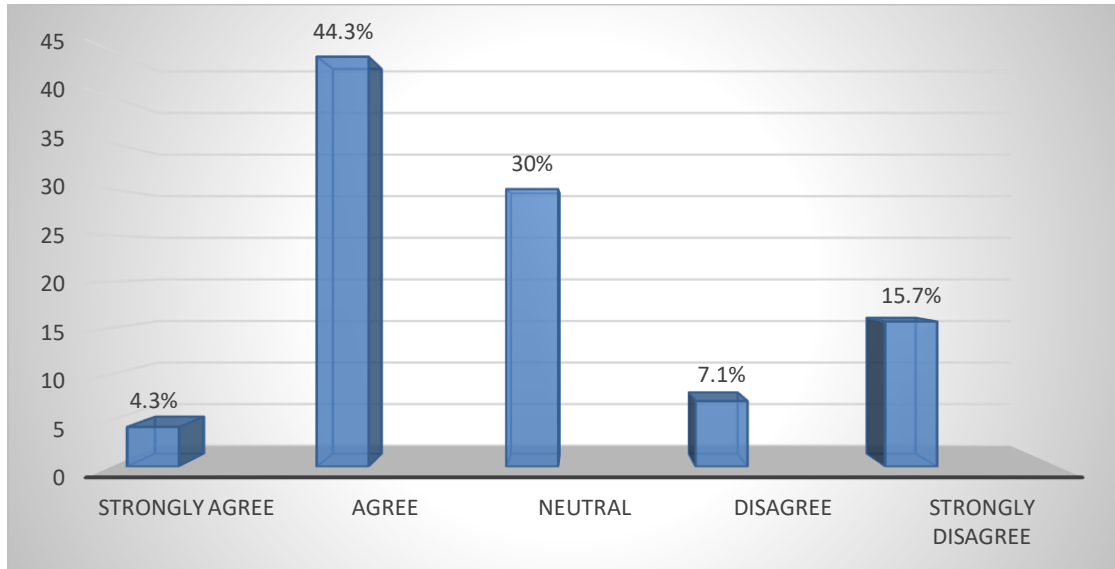


Figure 6. The extent of students' agreement on whether English Department has given the adequate preparation for the labor market

9. Graduates were asked “how would they rate their employment opportunities of their degrees” and based on their answers, most of the participants consider them fair (41.4), followed by those who think job opportunities of their degree are poor (27.1%) and 21.4% of the respondents who consider their employment opportunities as very poor and so on.

As the figure shows, the majority of the respondents agree that their job opportunities are poor or very poor, whereas only a small percentage of them find these opportunities as good or very good, of course all the time based on their personal experiences or points of view.

The aim of this question was to get a clearer point of view regarding students' perceptions and hopes about their future opportunities in the labor market.

Below, Figure 8 presents visually the aforementioned results.

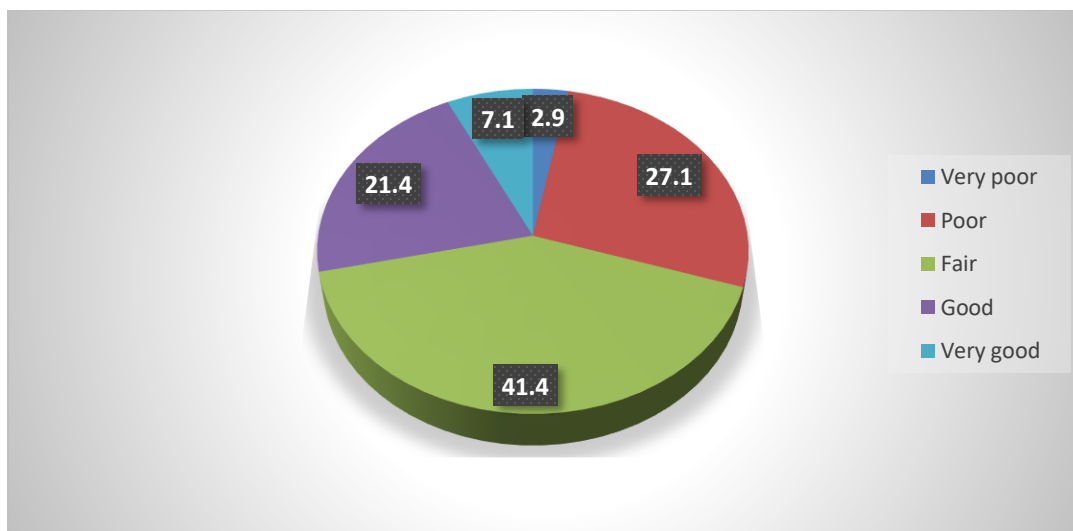


Figure 7. The rate of students' perceptions regarding employment opportunities of their degrees

10. Based on the skills gained from your studies in English Department, how ready do you feel to enter the labor market?

This question presents graduates' perspective in relation to their feelings and point of view regarding their readiness and preparation to enter the job market. The participants' responses are presented visually in the chart below and as it can be seen

the 50% of them feel sufficiently ready to be part of the labor market, 32.9% of them do not feel sufficiently ready, 10% of the total number of responses feel ready whereas 7% of them do not feel ready at all the enter the job market in their future.

To conclude, the overall number of students who feel ready or not ready to enter the labor market, has a slight difference.

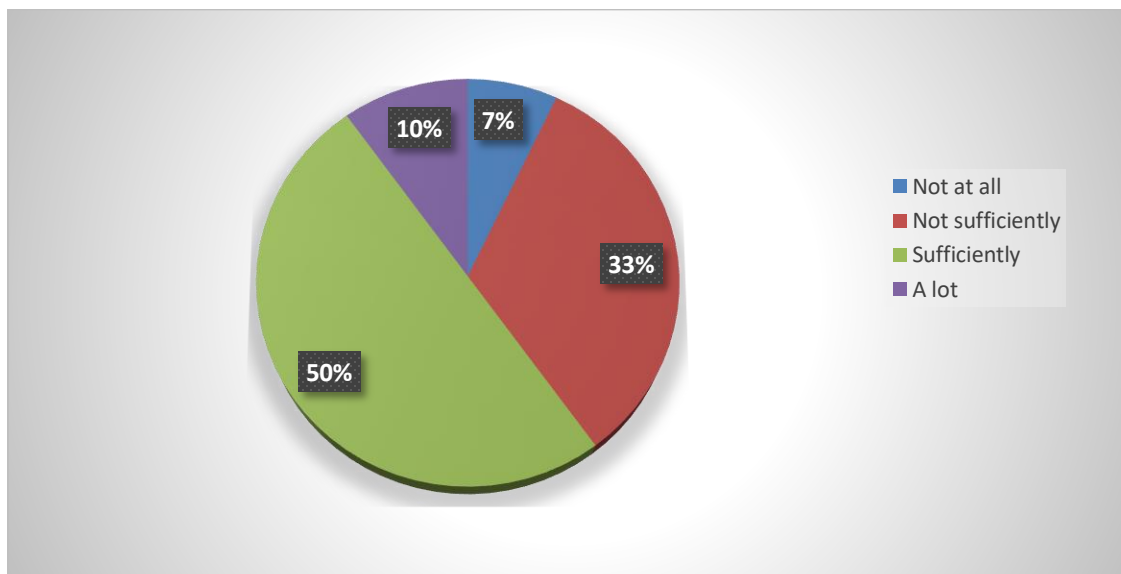


Figure 8. Graduates' readiness to enter the labor market

11. The following question was an open ended one for the participants which in the question above (*How ready do you feel to enter the labor market?*), claimed that they do not feel (sufficiently) ready to enter the labor market so they had to explain why do they feel that.

Only 10 responses were collected in this question and all of them were related to the lack of graduates; confidence, lack of practical work, lack of trainings and lack of experience.

12. The penultimate question of the questionnaire, "*Which of the subjects in English Department helped you the most to gain the skills that you have until now?*" aimed to identify which subjects actually were the most helpful to gain the skills that they already have gained.

A total of 56 (80% of the total number of participants) respondents answered in this question, where all of them chose subjects that had more practical work to do, as opposed to theoretical subjects, such as English for Academic Purposes 1 and 2 (49.1%), English 1,2,3,4 (25.4%), Methodology of teaching (19.6%), Practical English (9.8%), Teaching Practicum (9.8%). Professional Translation (7.8%) and Lesson Planning (3.9%).

13. The last question of the survey, gave participants the chance to express their thoughts on *which skills would they like to be more implemented throughout their studies in English Department*. From the total number of 70 participants, 46 (65.7%) responded on this question. The skills that lead with the highest number of responses are communication skills (34%) followed by leadership skills (15.5%), practical skills (13.3%), decision-making skills (11.1%), critical thinking skills (8.8%), problem-solving skills (6.6%), and research skills (6.5%).

V. DISCUSSION

This research sets out to analyze the implementation of job skills in English Departments in University of Prishtina. In this section the researcher of this study will try to interpret the results, their meaning and the significance or the importance of them. Also, this way through this section the answers will be given to the research questions of this research: how prepared are English Department graduates to enter the labor market and which skills, if any, are being taught and implemented in this institution. These answers, and the interpretation of the findings of the survey, will be elaborated further.

Firstly, the first part of the questionnaire aimed to find out whether graduates who previously had job experience, had encountered any difficulties in their workplace and if yes, to identify which were those difficulties. Based on graduates' responses, there is a slight difference between those who did not encounter difficulties in their jobs (52.6%) and those who encountered difficulties (47.3%). According to their answers, they faced various challenges that influenced their performance in the workplace.

As stated by Nilsson (2010), since university programs are supposed to make students ready for their future careers and work difficulties or challenges, graduates are also expected to be prepared to accept employers' requests and assumptions in a working atmosphere

However, still after entering the workplace there may be different difficulties that the employees encounter. Taking this into consideration, employees can face various challenges as not feeling enough skilled to start the job, lack of training before entering the job can affect their performance, they would not know what to expect or how to behave as part of a team etc.

5.1. Lack of training before entering the job market

Regarding one of the questions of the questionnaire which aimed to know whether graduates who had work experience had or did not have prior trainings before entering the job, the majority of students (57.7%) did not have prior training in their workplace. These results build on existing evidence on the importance of trainings before entering the labor market. The adequate training before starting a job will impact the performance and will result in unsatisfied employees which are likely to have a poor performance and a higher level of stress in their workplace which will automatically effect the productivity of the job.

According to Nazassi (2013) the main goal of prior trainings before entering a job is to improve job skills and abilities related to work tasks, as a result it is the main factor which can lead to future benefits for individuals as well as businesses.

As stated by Cole (2002), there are many benefits of trainings for example in regards to employees' courage and confidence, they feel more motivated and able to fill out the work tasks, they are able to use economically all the work supplies, also it brings a feeling of security and responsibility in the workplace.

"In recent years, there has been a strong emphasis on providing on work related training for undergraduates as a part of their degree program. Completion of industrial training of a specific duration by undergraduates is an important expectation of employers.

During the training, undergraduates get their first experience of real working environment and an understanding on working patterns within an organization. Training satisfaction is a measure of the attitude that individuals develop about the training undergone and is based on individuals' perceptions. This is an indicator of the outcome of training on individual trainees. Understanding of the factors affecting on trainees' satisfaction helps trainers to improve the quality of training." (Weligamage, 2009, p.123).

Considering all these factors, developing skills of the employees by training them is one of the best methods to meet the goals of the organization, to maintain a good performance, to help the work efficiency and to increase the staff quality.

Based on the result of this question, it shows that the majority of English graduates that have work experience did not have previous training, which can lead to poor performance of the employees or not being skilled enough to perform properly the tasks they are required to fulfill.

5.2. Challenges of graduates in finding a job in our labor market

This study supports the theory that the majority of the students face difficulties in finding a job because of the limited job opportunities. When asked about the challenges that graduates face to find a job, most of the respondents chose limited job opportunities, followed by lack of work experience, being unfamiliar with the labor market, lack of trainings, struggling with job searching and lack of job skills.

Limited job opportunities: the results indicate that graduates struggle to find an appropriate job that fits their skills and abilities that they have gained until graduation. So, there is a lack of job opportunities in the market. According to Halili (2016), the weak and deficient economy of Kosova does not give enough job opportunities for its young people which leads to increased unemployment rates. As a result, the government should form policies and organize programs that assist the shift from education to labor market.

Otherwise, not developing the employability of young generations, will have a negative influence on the whole economy of the country.

As stated by Halili (2016) there are not enough job opportunities for everyone who wants to get a job, so some youth stay out of the market for various reasons. They do not take part in any trainings of programs and they do not feel motivated to seek for any other job opportunities Also, young people these days do not accept every job that could be given to them because it will depend on different factors, for example whether the job corresponds to their ideas and future carries ambitions. Kosovo's youth is not well-prepared to enter the labor market as a result of the educational system and due to inadequate skills or not having job skills at all, which results in being less prepared and less employable for a longer period of time (Halili, 2016).

Lack of work experience: The second most chosen challenge that graduates face when seeking for a job, is the lack of job experience. Taking in consideration that every enterprise most of the time aims to recruit people who have job experience in a

particular field that is needed, in order for the employee to be familiar with the work task that they have to perform, this still remains a challenge for graduates who did not have that chance before.

The majority of the graduates lack crucial work skills as a result it is harder for them to get a job or they remain totally unemployable.

As mentioned above, based on employers' perspective, graduates are more oriented towards academic skills rather than real life skills, so mostly they lack in practice. Their preference is to hire people with both academic preparation and job skills, which implies a better outlook for graduates' future employment (Weligamage, 3014). Thus, leading to a need of matching the requirements of the labor market with the skills that are being taught in the university programs, in order for graduates to be successful in their career journeys.

Graduates who have no work experience are less likely to make it in the recruitment processes, no matter of their academic results, since the competition nowadays is very tough. All of this leads to graduates trying to get a job just for the money that they need, which might not be related to their educational fields, as well as graduates being able to find only part-time job with a lower salary that cannot fulfill their expenses. All this issue is related to the preparation of graduates in the university programs and gaining employability skills, because this way they could be able to perform effectively work tasks that are related to their programs even without a job experience in their specific fields.

5.3. Skills that English Department' graduates developed during their studies

When asked about the skills that students mostly developed throughout their studies, the results show that the most developed skills during graduates' studies in English Department, are research skills and teamwork. Followed by critical thinking skills, communication skills, time -management and problem-solving skills. All these skills were put out on the options of the question so the students only had to choose or tick which one they feel like they have developed during that time.

As stated by Greenbank (2014), higher education institutions should motivate students to set career goals and also plans on how they are going to gain the skills they need for recruiting processes. The skills that have been taught in English Departments of University of Prishtina are interrelated with the subject that the program offers, which lack in practical subjects and subjects that actually prepare you adequately to enter the labor market as an English Major.

Teamwork, as a soft skill, if one of the major components of winning a job (Hashim, 2015), since every employer seeks for employees that are good at collaborating with others and as a result a better performance at work will be achieved.

The reason why the respondents chose teamwork as one of the most developed skill during their studies, is because through 3 or 4 years of studies they practice group work in most of the subjects, where the professor divides students into groups in order for them to perform a certain task together, to share their ideas and to exchange information. In lectures most of the times students would be asked to work with a partner or groups of students, to cooperate or to discuss regarding whatever it is being taught, since also the number of students in lectures is usually 100-120 students in the class. So, the results show that teamwork, as a skill, is implemented in English Department and Literature

Furthermore, the results indicate that research skills are also implemented to a certain degree, also based on personal experiences they are mostly taught by the end of 3rd or 4th year of studies where students have the chance to get the first steps into doing a research. In subjects as English for Academic Purposes students have the chance to learn how to explore about a certain topic, how to formulate a questionnaire, writing academic papers with references and so much more. Also, all of this is done in a team, until the end of the year when they have to write individual papers which is also useful for graduates' thesis that they have to conduct by the end of their studies.

In contrast to the skills mentioned above, other job skills as decision-making, leadership communication skills and practical skills, which have a great impact on graduates' preparation to be employable, the results of this study show that they have a smaller incorporation in the class. This is related with graduates' responses in the question of which skills should be more implemented and they chose exactly the ones that were mentioned above. This gives rise to the fact that the aforementioned skills are not being implemented to a satisfactory lever, thus it impact students' confidence and preparation to be part of the labor market after graduating.

Regarding practical skills, the findings support the theory that there is a lack of implementing practical skills in English Department. As stated by Greenbank (2014), the advancement of undergraduates from theory to practice is the current need, because practice will increase the ability to be professionally prepared for a job. However, this in graduates' perspective seems to be deficient in their programs. Also, when they were asked which skills they would be like to be more implemented in their studies, the majority chose practical skills and communication skills that give them the opportunity to express their thoughts and to put theory into practice.

These results support one of the hypotheses of this study, that there is a lack of students' job skills preparation to enter the labor market in English and Literature Department in University of Prishtina. Furthermore, regarding students' perspective on the importance of job skills for their future careers, the vast majority of the respondents (92.6%) consider job skills very important for their future careers, which means that they do know the importance and the benefits of these skills that make one to be employable easily.

However, in regards to students' satisfaction with the skills that English Department provided them through their studies, it results that the majority of them (60%) seem to be satisfied with them, meanwhile a percentage of 17.1% are dissatisfied. This question was designed to measure students' satisfaction with the perceived skills and knowledge needed to be successful in their future careers as part of the labor market. Based on the results, the extent to which students feel satisfied is not satisfactory however it shows that there is an amount of contentment that is effected by many factors. When students realize that they are ready for their careers and they are able to make a relation between education and their career goals that is when they feel satisfied and more positive regarding their program or their educational institution (Tessema et al., 2012).

According to Melissa (2017), academic knowledge and teaching quality, are the main factors that affect students satisfaction. If the program will be effective in preparing students to be employable in the future, than students' satisfaction will be in a higher level.

Based on these facts, to increase students' needs and satisfaction, the institution should work on preparing students for their future with employability skills.

When asked about students' agreement if their department has given them the adequate preparation for the labor market, the results show that 44.3% of them actually agree that they got the right preparation from English Department meanwhile 30% of them had a neutral attitude regarding this, and only 157% of them disagree with this. However, based on the findings it results that students do feel like they have been getting the right preparation to be part of the labor market in their future careers.

5.4. Graduates' readiness to enter the labor market

Career readiness includes the academic, technical and employability skills that one needs to get a job and to stay employable, and the ability to use those skills in practical work situations (ACTE, 2010). All these skills should be provided by higher educational institutions in order for students to be really ready to work.

When the participants of this study were asked how ready do they actually feel to enter the labor market based on the skills that they have gained, the findings show that 60% of them feel ready, which means that the majority of the graduates feel that they are capable to be part of the job market.

However, the other part of the participants that claimed that they do not feel ready or not sufficiently ready to enter the labor market, they had an open-ended question to explain why and some of the responses were as following:

"The subjects do not prepare you to be prepared for the labor market; there is a lack of practical subjects in English Programs; lack of experience makes me feel less confident and not enough ready to get a job; lack of trainings as part of the programs; we need more job skills...". The results obtained from the data analysis indicate that the main reasons why graduates do not feel (sufficiently) ready to enter labor market is the lack of job skills implementation in their programs, lack of experience and lack of trainings.

Furthermore, regarding the subjects that graduates' think that helped them to gain the skills they have until now, the findings show that the most helpful subjects for them were English for Academic Purposes 1 and 2, Practical English, English 1,2,3,4, Methodology of teaching, Teaching Practicum, Professional Translation and Lesson Planning.

Based on the aforementioned results, practical subjects were mainly chosen for the main reason that they give the students the chance to put into practice the theory, so practice will help them to gain the ability of being professionally prepared for a job (Greenbank, 2014) Also, to gain other needed skills and to feel more prepared for their future work.

Lastly, when asked about which skills graduates would like to be more implemented in the English Program, the main skills that were mentioned were communication skills, leadership skills, practical skills, decision-making skills, critical-thinking skills, problem-solving skills and research skills. Not surprisingly, as the findings show, all these skills are all part of the set of skills that one should possess to be employable.

According to Weligamage & Seingthai, (2003), the aforementioned skills as leadership, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills also time management, self-understanding and career planning are some of the most frequent skills that employers are seeking for.

However, graduates that are not part of the labor market, think that undergraduates should be trained in these specific skills that were mentioned above (decision-making skills, problem solving, leadership skills) meanwhile graduates that are already employed

consider training mostly in creative thinking, learning and understanding skills (Weligamage & Seingthai, 2003).

Finally, only the most important findings of this study and their correlation with the hypotheses of the research will be summarized shortly in the following paragraphs:

- An initial objective of the project was to identify which job skills are being implemented in English Departments of University of Prishtina, or if in the first place they are being implemented. The outcome of this objective turned out to be positive in regard to the implementation of this set of skills however not in a satisfied level. The results of the study indicate that there is a certain extent of job skills' implementation, mostly teamwork, research skills and critical-thinking skills, in English Department however there is a lot of space for improvement and a greater incorporation of many more employability skills in general.
- A key research question in the current study was how prepared and how ready are English Department graduates to enter the labor market. The findings of this study demonstrate that the majority of English graduates feel sufficiently prepared to enter the labor market based on the skills that they have gained from their studies. However, the minority of graduates who claimed that they do not feel ready to be part of the labor market, said so, because of the lack of job skills' implementation. This seems to be a bit contradictory itself however those were the real reports that were conducted from data analysis of this study.
- The results show that the majority of English graduates agree that their program gave them the adequate preparation for the labor market. This corresponds to one of the hypothesis of the study that English graduates need extra preparation and trainings to fulfill labor market's requirements and to feel confident before entering the employment world.
- The results show that English graduates are not well-prepared due to their studying programs, which lack in teaching all the appropriate job skills, and this results in students' being less employable. This is also related to the lack of job opportunities that Kosova's labor market provides for its youth.
- The findings demonstrate that students would like to have a higher implementation of communication skills, which seem to be less implemented in English Departments, and other job skills as practical skills, leadership skills, critical-thinking skills and problem solving skills.
- The results show that the majority of English graduates are satisfied with the skills that English Department provided them with and therefore they consider themselves capable to enter the labor market with the learned skills.
- Another finding of this research is that the majority of the graduates that had work experience did not have prior trainings before starting their jobs.

5.5. Importance of the findings

This study will have a significant importance in regards to the development of job skills that are built in universities, especially in English Department and Literature in University of Prishtina. Since this thesis examines deeply students' perceptions it can have an impact on their points of view concerning their professional development but also it can affect the overall higher education perspective in this institution.

Considering the fact that our country is in an ongoing development also in the education field, this research can play an important role in addressing this issue to authorities, competent people who can make a difference and make improvements regarding this topic.

Hopefully, this survey will have a positive impact in the university, especially English Department students and it will lead to improvements and better implementation of employability skills in the future course programs of the institution and their curricula.

VI. Limitations and Future Studies

Every research has limitations which can occur due to different constraints that in a way or another can have an impact in the overall results or findings of the study.

One of the limitations that affected this study can be considered the fact that the questionnaire had to be delivered online, since universities were closed due to the situation that is caused by COVID 19. Consequently, this limited the researchers' abilities to find higher number of participants from University of Gjakova and University of Prizren. Therefore, the highest number of participants in the study were from University of Prishtina which were easily found, whereas other participants from Prizren and Gjakova were hardly found through social media. However, it was impossible to find a higher number of respondents, which would help to get a bigger picture of the topic that had to be investigated.

As a result, this influenced the findings of the study and it led to having a small number of participants from two other universities (that would help the researcher to get a bigger perspective of that particular department) and a much higher percentage of participants from University of Prishtina. However, regardless of the small number of participants from those universities, the researcher still

achieved to get productive findings.

For future studies, it would be suggested to find a higher number or maybe equal number of participants from each department of different universities. So, it could lead to a bigger perspective of every department and various comparisons could easily be done.

Also, future work should compare graduates' responses from different universities of different cities in order for the readership to get a clearer point of view from all of them and to be able to realize the contrast between the same departments just in different universities in Kosova. Finally, regardless of these limitations, the results still remain valid for further studies and investigations.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this study aimed to understand whether English graduates are prepared to enter the labor market and if job skills are being implemented in English Department in University of Prishtina.

Through the analysis of the data and based on the results: job skills are being implemented to a certain extent however not in a satisfied level as they should be, the majority of the graduates feel prepared and ready to enter the labor market, there is a satisfaction among graduates in regards to the skills that English Department has provided them with, there is a need of a better incorporation of certain job skills but mostly communication and practical skills and finally graduates seem to have the need for further trainings and practical work to help them with their future careers' preparation,

Moreover, if these skills were to be implemented as such, students would have had these skills acquired earlier thus resulting in bigger opportunities for preparation to be part of the labor market.

In regards to the recommendations, based on the overall findings of the research, this study recommends to start the incorporation of all job skills to a better level of implementation in order for students to be fully prepared to enter the job market; to put training and practicum as part of the university curricula and to give graduates' the chance to put theory into practice so they would feel capable of accomplishing work tasks without hesitation. If the graduates are given the opportunities to take part in job related trainings or practical jobs that would be very helpful for their professional development.

This research conducted useful information that would be needed for further researches in this field, and hopefully it will be beneficial for the improvement in the incorporation of employability skills in Kosova's educational programs specifically in English and Literature Department.

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