

## A COMPARISON OF THE SKILLS SHORTAGE ISSUE PERCEPTION AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF OF KOCAELI UNIVERSITY IN TURKEY AND VSB TU OSTRAVA, CZECH REPUBLIC

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**Abstract:** This publication is providing outcomes from researches carried out at University of Kocaeli, Turkey and VSB TU, Ostrava, Czech Republic. The aim of the research is to identify basic knowledge of academic staff members with regards the skills shortage as a phenomenon influencing the unemployment. Turkey is a country with specific demographic development. Whilst the population in most European countries is facing aging problems, in Turkey is resolving problems with too many young people as a result of strong population growth policy. The skills shortage issue is a result of major systematic failure. However, do the academic members of staff perceive it this way?

**Keywords:** Skills shortage, career management, unemployment, academic staff, educational programmes, career consultancy

**JEL Classification:** J21; J19; J29

### 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Eurostat the unemployment rate within European Union has reached 10.9% (EU27)00 in February 2013. The unemployment rate is a very important indicator that shows how efficient the employment policy of the given economy is. I would like to focus on an important paradox, where even in the times of high unemployment there are many job opportunities that cannot be filled due to the lack of professionals with required skills.

Current development of new technologies is accelerating the need for new professions (IT, High tech products, etc.) and at the same time some of the professions are no longer required or the demand is decreasing due to the economy shakeout processes.

Despite of upper mentioned, the unemployment among fresh graduates is becoming a critical issue all over the world. Together with recent "pension scheme crises" and economical recessions in most of the countries in the world, it makes it harder for world's economy to get back to equilibrium.

There are initiatives and projects designed to deal with this issue, subsidised from various support programmes from European union, national governments as well as from the corporate sector (corporate academies), working together to resolve this paradox and prevent further acceleration of skills shortage.

The shortage of skills may be interpreted as a result of the communication and cooperation between the corporate sector, educational system and the government in the respect of strategic planning reflecting the trends on the labour market in relation to technological development across the industrial sectors.

During my research I have realized that skills shortage, although it has been identified long time ago, and it was a problem already during economical conjuncture, it remains an unsolved issue worsening the economy efficiency during the times of recession with more significant negative effect.

During one of my presentation, I have introduced an interesting example where one filled position of integrated circuit designer, generated job opportunities for additional 50 jobseekers.

I believe there is a systematic solution to this phenomenon as itself it is a result of a global system failure. Obviously this issue is very complex and it requires many brains to achieve a satisfactory solution. To begin, there must be a consensus that this issue has a relevant impact on global economy. Whether is one or not, I am trying to demonstrate in this article.

### 2. METHODOLOGY

While deciding upon the research strategy I was not sure whether research among academic staff of economical faculties is relevant. My pros were the fundamental making role within the field of economical modelling and theory making. Cons were, however, that the issue of staff shortage on the labour market is mainly affecting technical specializations rather than humanities. After further digging for information, I have realized the demand is creating its own supply within the technical field. On the other hand humanities fresh graduates are the most affected by unemployment. They are not economically strong enough to make a change. Also the technical field needs more systematic approach and that should be provided from the economical point of view.

To determine key factors, I have carried out secondary data research on official data providers such as Eurostat, national statistical offices through internet. Based on this research I have set up a questionnaire to identify, how strongly lack of skills perceived among the academic staff is and what is their personal experience with specialization decision making.

I have carried out my primary research during my stay at Kocaeli University as a part of exchange programme in 2011. Turkey is a specific country from the demographic point of view. According to Eurostat Median of their age structure

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was 29,3 years, however in Czech republic it is more than ten years on top of it (39,6). European average according to Eurostat was 40.9 years in 2011.

If we compare the unemployment rate development in both countries we can find that according to Eurostat information from August 2012 Czech Republic's unemployment rate (6,7%) is 1,4% lower than in Turkey (8,1%) . From mentioned above we can conclude, that in compare to Czech Republic, Turkey has younger population and higher unemployment rate. Based on this I was expecting that Turkish academic staff would perceive the matter of skill shortage more importantly than their Czech colleagues.

Second part of my research was conducted upon my arrival back to Czech Republic. I have chosen VSB TU in Ostrava as both universities are based in very industrious areas and both have economical faculties as a part of technical university.

The questionnaire consists of 22 questions in total, both opened and closed questions have been chosen. Each research has been evaluated individually. To respect the logic of comparison all values have been recalculated to percentage. The research in Turkey had 78 replies the one in Czech republic only 65 replies. Research has been carried out for a period of one month in both cases. Due to publishers limits only partial results may be presented. I have selected such part of research that would provide an illustrative picture on researched topic results.

Research in Turkey has been carried out in September 2011. The research at VSB TU, Ostrava has been carried out in January 2013. The responders were in both cases members of academic staff of the faculty of economics. In both instances there were 53, 8% of male and 46,2 of female responders.

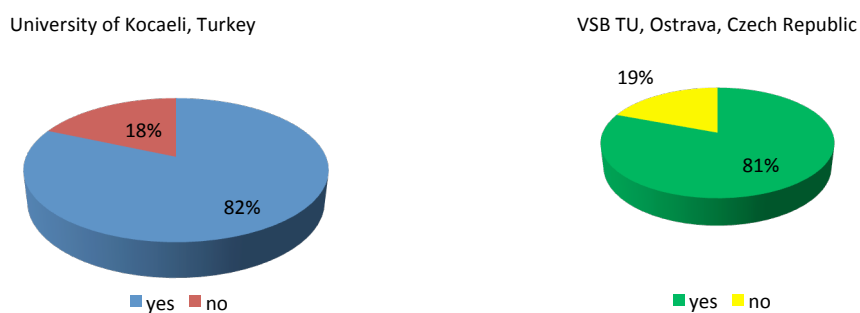
### 3. RESEARCH OUTCOME

There is a near match with regards opinion of both parties of respondents to the question related to skills shortage negative impact to unemployment as phenomenon. Picture number 5 is showing the comparison of individual research results.

As shown on figure 1 only 18% of respondents from University of Kocaeli and 19% from VSB TU do not agree that skills shortage is worsening unemployment. This can be interpreted as a positive result with regards, ability to identify the problem as a presumption to potential of resolution. This also means that vast majority of academic staff realize the impact of skills shortage to national economy. That is a elementary fundament for further research activities, required for more detailed understanding of this topic.

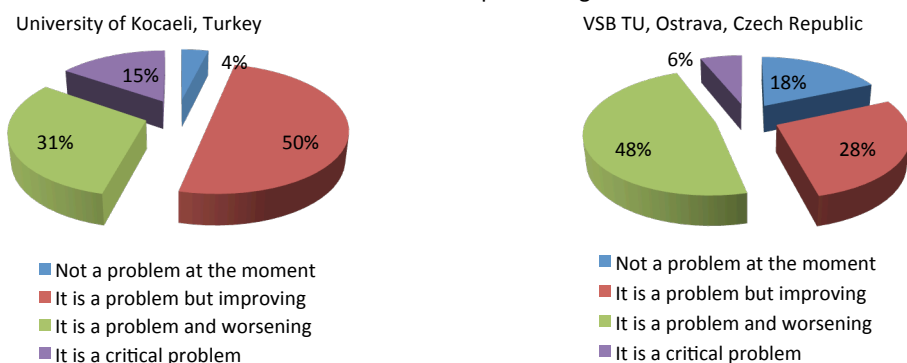
Following question aims to identify the tendency of the skills shortage issue development. It is interesting that the answers differ by structure. The common agreement is that skills shortage is a problem. The perception of the tendency however varies.

On figure 2 first to notice is that 18% of respondents from VSB TU, Ostrava do not perceive skills shortage as a problem. This also corresponds to previous question, where 19% of these respondents did not believe lack of skills is worsening unemployment. It would not make any sense should they believe this issue have a negative impact on unemployment but did not consider it a problem. On the other hand out of 18% of respondents from University of Kocaeli that did not agreed to negative impact of skills shortage to unemployment, only 4% do not even consider this phenomenon to be a relevant problem.



**Figure 1** Do you agree that lack of skills is worsening unemployment?

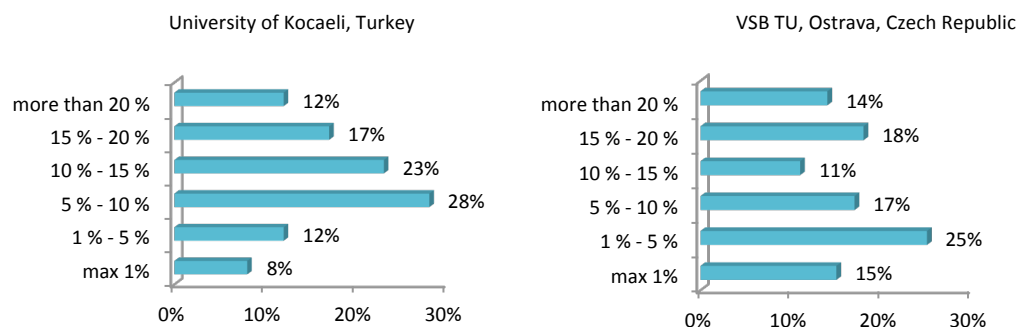
Source: own processing



**Figure 2** Perceiving of lack of skills

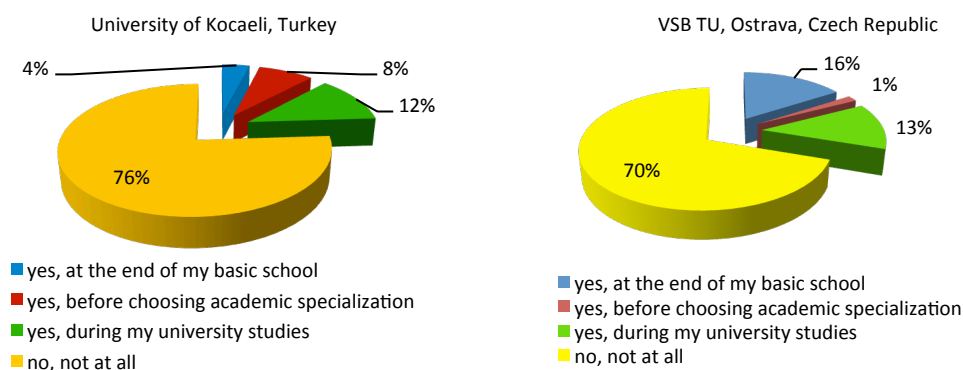
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**Figure 3** What do you think is the percentage of total unemployment caused by the skills shortage?

Source: own processing



**Figure 4** Have you been offered a career consultancy at any stage of your studies?

Source: own processing

To conclude 96% of respondents from University of Kocaeli and 82% of respondents from VSB TU, Ostrava recognises skills shortage as a problem. 50% of respondents from University of Kocaeli and 28% of respondents from VSB TU, Ostrava, believe problem is improving, 31% of respondents from University of Kocaeli and 48% of respondents from VSB TU, Ostrava consider the tendency is worsening and 15% of respondents from University of Kocaeli and 6% of respondents from VSB TU, Ostrava recon the problem is critical.

To provide a better visibility on how serious impact do the academic staff members perceive skills shortage has on total unemployment, respondents were asked to express the percentage of total unemployment they believe is caused by skills shortage. Picture number 7 illustrates the replies of both parties. Although we can see the replies on figure 3 vary, we can still summarise that 29% of respondents from University of Kocaeli and 32% of respondents from VSB TU, Ostrava believe that part of total unemployment caused by skills shortage is higher than 15%. Highest percentage of respondents from University of Kocaeli is 28% of respondents and these believe the share of skills shortage on total unemployment is between 5%-10%. Respondents from VSB TU, Ostrava reached highest percentage at 25% and there respondents believe the share is between 1 % to 5 %.

Following part of research is focused on respondents' perception of skills management level based on their personal experience. This should help to identify the fundamentals of the issue throughout the individual stages of educational system. In this case academic staff proves to be relevant target group for this research as all of the respondents have accomplished highest education level.

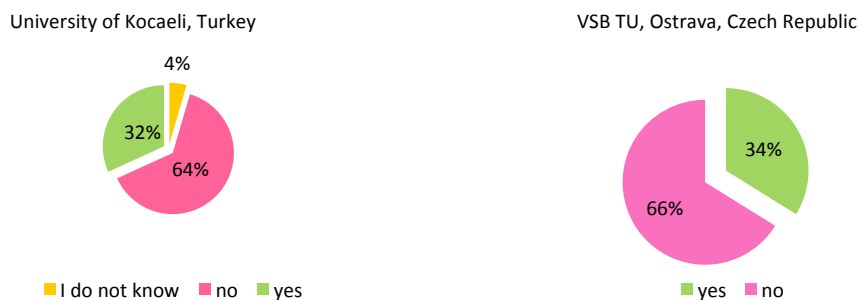
As shown on figure 4 number 8, 76% of respondents from University of Kocaeli and 70% of respondents from VSB TU, Ostrava have not been offered a career consultancy at any stage of their studies. Only 4% of respondents from University of Kocaeli and 16% of respondents from VSB TU, Ostrava have been provided career consultancy during the basic school. 8% of respondents from University of Kocaeli and 1% of respondents from VSB TU, Ostrava have been offer career consultancy before choosing university specialization and 12% of respondents from University of Kocaeli and 13% of respondents from VSB TU, Ostrava.

According to my opinion this is one of the main systematic failures. Should there be equilibrium between skills available and skills required, proper career planning is a must. If the children are not professionally guide on what specializations are required and what education out of these would be suitable to students' capacities and qualities, it is very likely they will be influenced their environment, which results in high numbers of unemployed with irrelevant skills on one side and lack of required skills on the other side.

Figure number 5 displays the opinion of the respondents on whether the national educational programs are reflecting employers' requirements.

As we can find out from figure number 5, 64% of respondents from University of Kocaeli and 66% of respondents from VSB TU, Ostrava do not believe that the educational programmes are effectively reflecting employers' requirements. It is very interesting that two countries with different demographic and geographic parameters are facing similar difficulties with regards the lack of skills issue based on similar systematic failure.

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**Figure 5** Do you believe that current educational programmes are effectively reflecting employer's requirements?

Source: own processing

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Skills shortage is a phenomenon affecting employers in the respect of expansion limits. For systematic change that would allow the supply of skills match the demand for skills, the key barriers, preventing the market getting back to equilibrium, must be identified. This research proves that majority of academic staff from both universities perceive skills shortage to be a problem having a negative impact on employment. Also over 70% of respondents were not

provided any career consultancy throughout their studies. At the same time over 64% of respondents do not believe that current educational programmes reflect employers requirements for skills of fresh graduates. Very interesting finding is also the fact that the academic staff from both universities had such similar results. Out of 11 comparable answers from the original questionnaire, 7 have been near matches differing by couple of percent. This shows this is a globally recognized issue.

#### REFERENCES

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