

THE JOB PROSPECTS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON THE REGIONAL LABOUR MARKETS

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Abstract:

The goal of the paper is to discuss the possible job prospects of university students on the regional labour markets in terms of their professional knowledge and skills, work and social habits, development potential and personal aspirations. The paper is based on the analysis of available secondary data and the results of the authors' questionnaire survey among students of the College of Regional Development in Prague and the Masaryk Institute of Advanced Studies of the Czech Technical University in Prague that was focused on students' motivation to study at university and their ideas about the future career. The survey was conducted from February to April 2016. The relevant data were obtained from 374 students. The results support the assumption that the students potentially have a good chance to succeed on the labour market due to their broader knowledge, skills and abilities, but they should be prepared for continuous learning and should not expect rapid career.

Introduction

As the Czech economy has grown and the unemployment has fallen since 2015, many Czech employers have experienced a serious shortage of skilled workers with both secondary education (e.g. lathe operators, welders, electricians, programmers, etc.) and higher education (e.g. specialists in transport and logistics, mechanical engineers, civil engineers, electrical engineers, etc.). The problem is that the professional and personal qualities of applicants often do not meet the requirements of employers.

From the perspective of common job requirements, suitable job applicants must demonstrate: relevant professional knowledge and skills, suitable work and social habits, and appropriate development potential for successful performance, professional growth and career advancement (Šikýř & Bušina, 2014). However, to find such applicants on today's Czech labour market is not easy. A common problem of employing students and graduates is that they lack relevant professional skills and social habits (Cutillas, Monfort & Tortajada, 2011). Many students and graduates have better theoretical knowledge than practical experience (Stanciu & Banciu, 2012). Some students and graduates also have no real idea about their future career, but often require positions that do not match their abilities, just to get a job promising them high earnings and rapid career (Garcia-Aricál & Van der Velden, 2008). This leads to the fact that employers tend to hire experienced workers than students and graduates with inadequate experience and unreal expectations.

1. Goal and method

The goal of the paper is to discuss the possible job prospects of university students on the regional labour markets in terms of their professional knowledge and skills, work and social habits, development potential and personal aspirations.

Achieving the goal of the paper is based on both the analysis of available secondary data (especially the empirical data available in the scientific literature and the statistical data provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic) and the results of the authors' questionnaire survey among students of the College of Regional Development in Prague (Urban and Regional Development Management and Security and Safety Management in Regions) and the Masaryk Institute of Advanced Studies of the Czech Technical University in Prague that was focused on students' motivation to study at university and their ideas about the future career.

The survey was conducted from February to April 2016. The questionnaire included twenty two multiple choice questions focused on the motivation to study at university and the ideas about the future career. The questionnaire was distributed to bachelor's students. The relevant data were obtained from 374 students. The respondents were characterized by gender (30% male, 70% female), age (6% less than 20 years, 75% 20-24 years, 5% 25-29 years, 4% 30-34 years, 8% 35-49 years, 1% more than 50 years), years of work experience (49% less than 1 year, 22% 1-2 years, 13% 3-5 years, 5% 6-10 years, 4% 11-15 years, 3% 16-19 years, 4% more than 20 years), form of study (80% full-time, 20% combined), and year of study (50% first year, 31% second year, 19% third year).

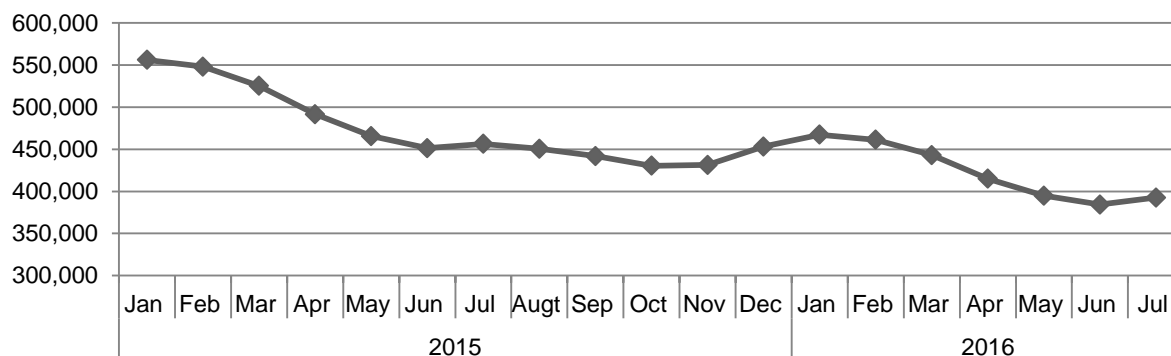
The data analysis was based on the calculation of relative frequencies and the evaluation of the dependence of responses on gender and year of study using contingency tables, chi-square tests of independence and sign schemes.

2. Results and discussion

The recovery and growth of the Czech economy is accompanied by a decrease in unemployment and by an increase in vacancies. Based on the data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic (MPSV, 2016), the figure 1 shows the number of job seekers registered by job offices from January 2015 to July 2016 and the figure 2 shows the number of vacancies registered by job offices from January 2015 to July 2016. By July 31, 2016 job offices registered altogether 392,667 job seekers and 135,758 vacancies. There were 2.9 job seekers for one vacancy at average. The share of unemployed persons (the ratio of available job seekers aged 15 to 64 years in the population of the same age) in the Czech Republic was 5.4%. The highest share of unemployed was in Usti region (8.3%). The lowest share of unemployed was in Plzen region (3.8%). The most vacancies were in Prague (19,189). The least vacancies were in Karlovy Vary region (3,764). In comparison, by July 31, 2015 job offices registered altogether 456,341 job seekers and 98,055 vacancies. There were 4.7 job seekers for one vacancy at average. The share of unemployed persons in the Czech Republic was 6.3%. The highest share of unemployed was in Usti region (9.4%). The lowest share of unemployed was in Plzen region, South Bohemia region and Prague (4.6%). The most vacancies were in Central Bohemia region (12,657). The least vacancies were in Karlovy Vary region (3,071).

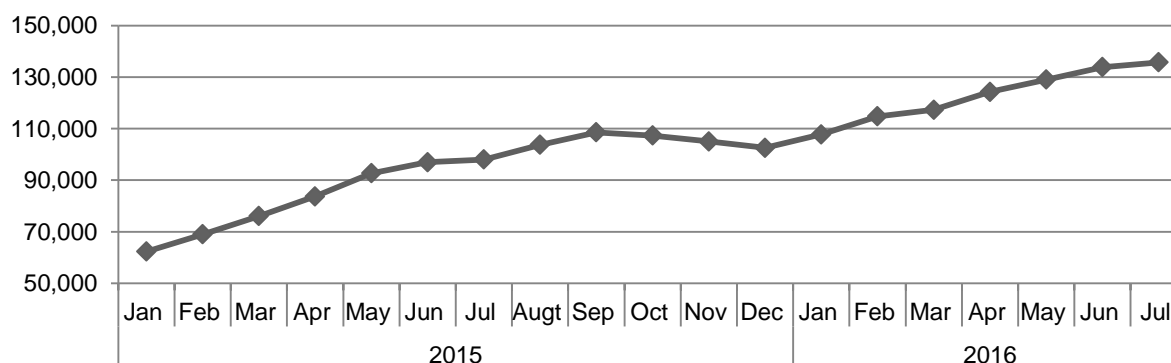
In general, among the unemployed on the Czech labour market are mainly - and constantly - unskilled workers, young people aged 20 to 29 and people aged 50 and over. Especially long-term unemployment among young people and people aged 50 and over seems to be a serious social problem that is associated with significant costs in the Czech Republic as well as in the other European countries (Sirůček & Pavelka, 2013).

Figure 1: *The number of job seekers registered by job offices*



Source: authors based on the data from MPSV (2016)

Figure 2: *The number of vacancies registered by job offices*



Source: authors based on the data from MPSV (2016)

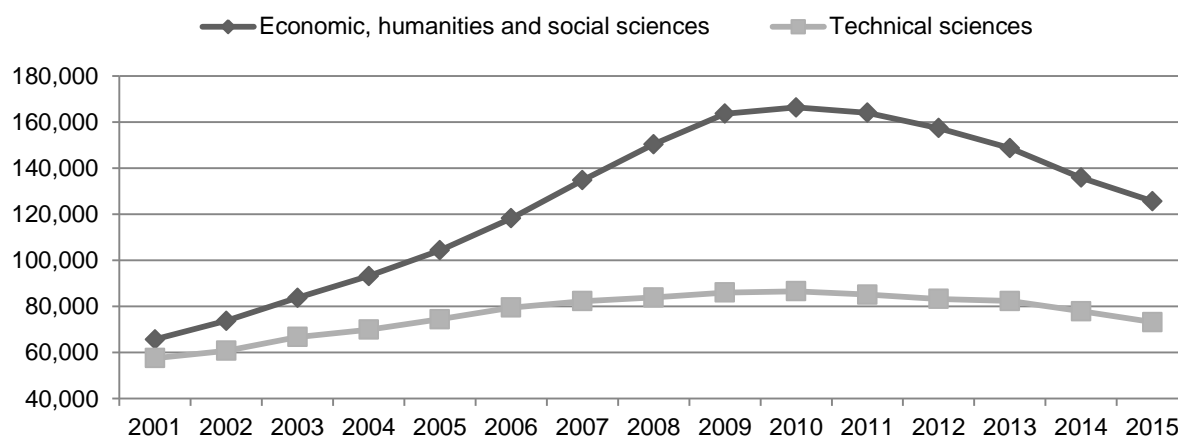
In today's developed countries, people with higher education are seen as the most important source (Kucharčíková, 2013) that determines the future prosperity and competitiveness of the society (Pavlin & Svetlicic, 2014). People with higher education also significantly increase their chances on the labour market to reach a satisfying and rewarding career (Livanos & Nunez, 2016). However, the competition among graduates is strong and the requirements of employers are high (Mocanu, Zamfir & Maer-Matei, 2014).

Based on the date of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic (MSMT, 2016), the figure 3 shows the number of students of economic, humanities, social and technical sciences in the Czech Republic from 2001 to 2015. The data show that the number of students of economic, humanities and social sciences is consistently higher than the number of students of technical sciences. The increasing quantity of university students raises questions about their professional and personal qualities, especially in relation to the needs of the labour market and the requirements of employers.

One of the important conditions for successful graduation is definitely the motivation of students to study at university. The students themselves must want to learn and adopt necessary knowledge, skills and abilities. According to the authors' survey results, 72% of students stated

that they are motivated to study at university by an effort to increase their chances on the labour market. In this context, 92% of students agreed that higher education gives them more chances to succeed on the labour market. On the other hand, 76% of students stated that they see their chances on the labour market as medium. They are afraid of the strong competition and the lack of work experience. The data analysis showed a significant difference between male and female students ($p < 0.05$). The male students estimated their chances on the labour market as much higher than the female students.

Figure 3: *The number of students of economic, humanities, social and technical sciences in the Czech Republic*



Source: authors based on the data from MSMT (2016)

The common problems that students meet on the labour market are related to the following points:

- Students lack relevant professional skills, even if they worked during their studies, but every employer has specific requirements. 83% of students stated that they work during the academic year to earn money and get experience, but only 22% of them stated that they work in the field of study. Of course, every work is good to get needed work and social habits, but in some cases it is better to focus on the study than on the work that has no added value. The data analysis showed no significant difference between male and female students.
- Students do not want to start from scratch, overestimate themselves and require positions that do not match their abilities. 65% of students stated that they want to be managers (manage people), which is normal when they study to become managers, but they forget that it is a long way and that they have a lot to learn. The data analysis showed no significant difference between male and female students.
- Students do not have needed work and social habits and are not ready for the hard work at the beginning of their career, including learning and adopting necessary professional knowledge, skills and abilities. 57% of students stated that they want to work in the field of study and 80% of students stated that they are ready for further education in the field of study. The data analysis showed a significant difference between male and female students ($p < 0.05$). The female students wanted to work in the field of study more frequently than the male students.
- Students are not willing to commute to work. 50% of students stated that they want to work in their place of residence, 34% of students stated that they are willing to commute to work, and 16% of students stated that they are willing to move for work. The data analysis showed no significant difference between male and female students.

- Students expect higher wages than employers can offer to newcomers with the lack of relevant work experience. 56% of students stated that after graduation they expect the net monthly income between CZK 20,000 and CZK 29,000 (approximately between EUR 740 and EUR 1,072). According to the data of the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO, 2016), in Q1 2016, the average gross monthly nominal wage was CZK 26,480 (approximately EUR 980). The data analysis showed a significant difference between male and female students ($p < 0.05$). The male students expected a higher net monthly income than the female students.

The expectations of students about their jobs include meaningful work, self-fulfilment, friendly team, fair wages, favourable environment, job security, professional management, personal development, employee benefits or career prospects. It is obvious that expectations of students are great and that it is relatively difficult to fulfil all these expectations in one job or at one company. Despite all the expectations, students are aware of the fact that the success on the labour market is determined by their abilities. According to students, the most important abilities necessary for the success on the labour market include the ability to communicate with people (79%), the ability to solve problems (76%), the ability of team work (57%), the ability to apply own knowledge (57%), or the ability to acquire new knowledge (55%). Generally, students should continually improve their knowledge of foreign languages, their computer skills or their knowledge of management, economics, psychology, sociology, marketing, informatics or law.

Conclusion

Although the current results of the questionnaire survey on students' motivation to study at university and their ideas about the future career do not allow authors to draw general conclusions, they confirm main findings of earlier studies cited above and they show some interesting tendencies in the students' attitudes to the study and the career. These tendencies lie in the fact that students complain of theoretical subjects without obvious connections and practical applications. This dissatisfaction can reduce the motivation of students to study. Many students do not attend the university to learn something new, but to take the test or pass the exam. They go to work rather than to school to earn money and get experience. This seems to be a big challenge for many other universities to deal with similar problems.

The increasing quantity of various university students raises questions about their professional and personal qualities, especially in relation to the needs of the labour market and the requirements of employers. The authors' survey results support the assumption that the students potentially have a good chance to succeed on the labour market due to their broader knowledge, skills and abilities, but they should change their attitude to the preparation for the future career. The students are afraid of the strong competition and the lack of work experience. These fears may be justified, but the way is not to replace the study by the work during the academic year that has no added value. Instead, the way is to focus on the systematic development of necessary professional knowledge, skills and abilities, including knowledge of foreign languages, computer skills or leadership abilities. The students should be ready to start from scratch. They should not overestimate themselves and require positions that do not match their abilities. They should be ready for the hard work at the beginning of their career. On the other hand, the universities should be able to provide students with relevant theoretical knowledge and practical applications, ideally in collaboration with potential employers. The employers should learn to create appropriate and attractive employment opportunities for students and graduates to ensure the effective development of their potential.

These issues open up new possibilities for further research in the field of the employability of university students. The authors' survey represents the first step in the authors' research on the motivation of university students to study and their attitudes to the future career. The results should bring proposals to improve the education process at universities.

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