Determining worries of final year undergraduate students about finding jobs: Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) as an example

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Abstract

Today, 'youth unemployment' is not only one of the most important problems in developing countries such as Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), but also it is a significant problem in the developed western nations. In this regard, the aim of this study is to determine the opinions and identify worries of the final year undergraduate students about finding jobs. Data were obtained by asking 100 final year undergraduate students at one of the private universities in TRNC to write a composition and by using face-to-face meeting technique. The opinions of the students on several different aspects are analysed by the descriptive analysis method. According to the data obtained, the level of the anxiety of the final year undergraduate students about finding jobs is high and the reasons for the anxiety include financial difficulties, the quality of the provided education, presence of a considerable number of unemployed graduates and the problems related to their programme of study.

Keywords: TRNC, unemployment, worries about finding jobs, reasons for unemployment, education.

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1. Introduction

University education is a fundamental determinant of the career decision of an individual. During the first few years of university education, there are several factors that exert a pressure on students and put them under stress. These factors include anxiety that arises as a result of being away from parents, getting accustomed to a new environment, problems related to accommodation and being adapted to a new environment and financial difficulties. Through the end of the university education, concerns for the future and so employability anxiety becomes the major source of anxiety for students. Especially, as unemployment amongst young people and graduates is common in North Cyprus, students become more hopeless and anxious about finding jobs. Dokmen (1989) stated that the extent of the anxiety of the final year undergraduate students about their future and finding jobs are significantly greater than the first year undergraduate students (Aktaran Koc & Polat, 2006; Nazime & Huseyin, 2010).

University education prepares students for different career sectors by providing them with fundamental education. However, increased number of universities and graduates, understanding the importance of improving themselves in a way that they can compete with other young people to get a job and the unemployment problem in North Cyprus, led into the elevation of the worries of the young people in regards to the unemployment (Dursun & Aytac, 2009; Uzunboylu, Eris & Ozcinar, 2011).

The graduation of the university students is being either the beginning of their professional career or the beginning of the unemployment. The occupation can be defined as an activity which is being performed for payment, which has rules that are established by society and which involves the activities based on the knowledge and skills gained by education (Yanikkerem et al., 2004). Occupation is the primary source of the identity of an individual and it provides individuals to get respect from and have connections with other people, to have a status in a society and to have a feeling that they are useful (Kuzgun, 2000). Career choice, plans of individuals that are made to take their role in life, friendships, employability anxiety and several responsibilities that individuals undertake can be regarded as some of the factors that lead into anxiety in individuals (Cakmak & Hevedanli, 2004; Cavus, Uzunboylu & Ibrahim, 2008).

Studies investigating the factors that affect the anxiety of the students who are studying at the universities in North Cyprus are limited and insufficient and this emphasises the importance of this study.

2. Aims of the study

The main aim of the study is to determine the level of employability anxiety of final year undergraduate students who are studying at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Near East University, TRNC. In order to achieve the main aim, the following aims are determined to be investigated.

1. To what extent the education that you receive at the university prepare you for your professional career?
2. Do you have any worries about finding a job after graduating from university? Why?
3. Are you willing to study this subject?
4. Did your programme of study at the university meet your expectations?
5. After graduating from university, where and in which position do you want to see yourself in your professional career? In other words, can you explain your vision about your profession?

3. Method

3.1. Study model

This study which aims to identify the worries of the final year undergraduate students about finding jobs is examined and interpreted according to the thematic approach depending on the descriptive analysis method which is based on qualitative data.

3.2. Study group

Hundred final year undergraduate students who were studying at the Faculty of Health Sciences and Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences in Near East University during the first semester of the 2015–2016 academic year were forming the study group.

3.3. Data collection tool and collection of the data

A questionnaire was prepared by the investigator by receiving opinions from the experts of the field. The data collection tool consisted of open-ended questions that students could give their opinions such as 'what are the impacts of the university education on professional career'?, 'what are the reasons for the anxiety of the students after they graduate from university'?, 'what are the reasons of the students for choosing their programme of study'?, 'what are they expecting from their programme of study'? and 'in which position do students see themselves after graduating from university'? Data obtained in the first semester of 2015–2016 from the students of the Faculty of Health Sciences and Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences of Near East University by asking students to complete a questionnaire about their worries about finding jobs. Data obtained were analysed by the thematic approach and tabulated together with the frequency values.

4. Findings

1. To what extent the education that you receive at the university prepare you for your professional career?

Opinions obtained from the final year undergraduate students by asking them to what extent the university education prepares them for their professional careers are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Impact of the university education on the professional career

Opinions	Frequency
Prepares slightly.	46
Prepares insufficiently.	41
Prepares completely.	13

As it is shown in Table 1, most of the students stated that the university education prepares them slightly for their professional careers and a small number of students stated that university education prepares them completely for their professional careers.

According to this, the opinions of some of the students are given below:

S.O.1: 'I think, even though the education that I will receive throughout the university will prepare me for my professional career in a theoretical way, it will not prepare me sufficiently in a practical way for my professional career. This made me think that I should also improve myself after graduating from university'.

S.O.2: 'I think that I am ready for the professional career as a result of the education that I have received at the university and the internships that I have undergone. But I never thought that I can ever be successful without any experience'.

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S.O.3: 'The education that we are receiving at the university is highly insufficient. Except than the period that we had an internship, the education that we are receiving at the university is not associated with the professional career at all'.

S.O.4: '......the education that I am receiving is very qualified, but we are spending most of our time for the lectures that will not be beneficial for us in the future. Having the opportunity to do internships every year made us take the first steps on our careers'.

2. Do you have any worries about finding a job after graduating from university? Why?

The answers of the final year undergraduate students to the question which asks whether they have any worries about finding a job after graduating or not and the reasons for their answers are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Worries about finding jobs after graduating from university

Opinions	Frequency
Yes	62
Increasing numbers of graduates	16
Reduced numbers of job opportunities	14
Public personnel selection examination	12
Lack of self-confidence	9
Private sector places emphasis on experience.	7
Different sectors are doing the same job.	4
No	38
Having a job opportunity that he/she can start directly after graduating.	12
Confident about finding a job.	10
Confident about the subject that he/she is studying.	9
Will run the family business.	7

As shown in Table 2, when students were asked if they have any worries about finding a job, 62 students gave the answer 'Yes' and so they stated that they have worries about finding a job, while 38 students gave the answer 'No' and so stated that they do not have any worries about finding a job. When the reasons of the students for giving the answer of 'Yes' were determined, increasing numbers of graduates, reduced number of job opportunities and civil service examinations are listed amongst the most important reasons. On the other hand, it was determined that for the students who gave the answer of 'No', the most important reasons for their answers include having a job opportunity that he/she can start directly after graduating, being confident about finding a job and being confident about their subject. According to these, some of the statements of the students are given below:

S.O.1: 'I do not have any worries about finding a job after graduating because I have already found the job that I will do after graduating from the university'.

S.O.2: 'Yes, I am worried due to the increasing numbers of graduates, reduced number of job opportunities, financial problems and low salary payments'.

S.O.3: 'I am worried about finding a job like everybody else because I do not think that I am sufficiently qualified to get a job. This led me to lose my confidence about myself'.

S.O.4: 'I cannot say that I am worried about finding a job. The job opportunities for the subject that I am studying are more than the ones for other subjects. Also, I think that if a person is good at his/her job, he/she does not need to worry about finding a job'.

S.O.5: 'I think that my main struggle in finding a job will be the graduates who studied other subjects and will do the same job that I will do'.

S.O.6: 'I do not even think that I will find a job after I will graduate. As the private sector seeks for experienced staff, as the examination required for being a civil servant is difficult and as this

examination process is hard, I lost all of my hopes for getting a job. In addition to that having graduate friends who are unemployed is enough to make me pessimistic about finding a job'.

3. Are you willing to study this subject?

The answers of the final year undergraduate students for the question asking whether they are willing to study the subject that they are currently studying at the university or not and if they did not want to study this subject, the reasons indicating why they choose to study this subject are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reasons of university students for choosing their undergraduate courses

Opinions	Frequency
Yes – I was willing to study my programme of study	81
No	19
My grades were only sufficient to fulfil the entry requirements of my course of study.	7
My parents wanted me to study this subject.	6
This course is a newly established course.	4
I chose my course of study due to advise.	2

As shown in Table 3, 81 students indicated that they were willing to study their course, while 19 students indicated that they did not want to study their courses. Students, who indicated that they were not willing to study their subjects, stated the main reasons of not willing to study their subject as having grades that were only sufficient to fulfil the entry requirements of their course of study and being directed by their parents or by other people around them to study that subject. According to these, the statements of some of the students are given below:

S.O.1: 'Actually, I wanted to study another subject but due to the examination system I have to study my current course of study'.

S.O.2: 'I was willing to study this subject and I really like to study it. I have never dreamed about studying another subject'.

S.O.3: 'I am not really willing to studying this subject. My parents forced me to study this subject'.

4. Did your programme of study at the university meet your expectations?

The answers of the final year undergraduate students that were asked about whether their programmes of study meet their expectations are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The opinions of the university students about whether their programme of study meet their expectations or not

Opinions	Frequency
Yes	56
No	31
Partially	13

As it is shown in Table 4, most of the students indicated that their programme of study meets their expectations. According to this, the opinions of some of the students are given below:

S.O.1: 'I am willing to study this subject but I cannot say that my expectations are met by the programme of study'.

S.O.2: 'My expectations were not met at the university as the university administration does not consider my course of study as an important course and as the opportunities and the facilities provided by the course is not sufficient'.

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S.O.3: 'The quality of both the theoretical and practical education which is provided by the university is much greater than my expectations'.

5. After graduating from university, in your professional career where and in which position do you want to see yourself? In other words, can you explain your vision about your job?

The answers of the final year undergraduate students that were asked about their visions about their jobs are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The opinions of the university students about their job visions

Opinions	Frequency
I will run my own business.	40
I will be a civil servant.	27
I will have a career in academia.	25
I will have a career in politics.	8

The opinions of the students on their job visions which mean the position that they want to see themselves in the future is presented in Table 5. According to the interviews that have been done with students, most of the final year undergraduate students indicated that they want to establish their own businesses, so they want to be employers.

S.O.1: 'In the future, I see myself as an attaché who is fully responsible for the international relationships of the country'.

S.O.2: 'After graduating from university, first I see myself as an expert in my subject, then as a doctor and then as a professor. My biggest ambition is being awarded a Nobel Prize'.

S.O.3: 'I do not have extreme ambitions, I just want to be a civil servant'.

S.O.4: 'I am planning to establish a new business and be successful by making a breakthrough'.

5. Conclusion

The aim of the study was determined as obtaining opinions of the final year undergraduate students about finding jobs and the identification of their worries about this aspect. According to the data obtained in this study, final year undergraduate students stated that education provided by the university slightly prepares them for their professional career. Students stated several reasons for not feeling prepared for their professional careers and major reasons that students indicated include 'not being provided with sufficient education at universities', 'not having a link between the education that they gained at the university and the professional career that they had', 'being provided by theoretical knowledge throughout the university but having insufficient practical knowledge', 'not having a chance to learn about the professional working conditions and environment as there are insufficient and limited internship opportunities' and 'having considerable numbers of lectures that are out of context of their programme of study'. It was determined that most of the final year undergraduate students have worries about finding jobs after graduating from university. The primary factor that affects the anxiety of the students is the increasing number of graduates. Following this, several other factors are listed such as reduced numbers of job opportunities, the hardness of the public personnel selection examination, having limited job opportunities in the public sector, experience-based employee selection of the private sector, the same job is being done by people who studied different subjects and lack of self-confidence. It was determined from the opinions of the students that most of the students were willing to study their programme of study and they decided and choose their programme of study. However, when they were asked whether their courses of study meet their expectations or not, most of them mentioned that their courses of study do not meet their expectations. As a result of this, it can be concluded that students were willing to study their course of study and they preferred to study it; however, they were expecting to gain more in their universities

about their programme. This situation is challenging. When students were asked in which position they see themselves after graduating from university, most of them indicated that they want to establish their own business. According to the literature search (Dursun & Aytac, 2012; Gundogan, 2005; Izgi, 2012; Tuncsiper, Bicil & Bicen, 2012), it was determined that the education centres should be regulated according to the needs of the labour market, the link between education and the professional career is weak and this significantly affects the worries of the students and expectations from their course. The conclusion driven by this study is consistent with the literature.

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