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Article

The Cost of Education in the Pre-University System

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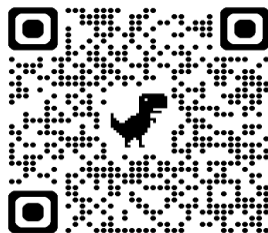
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ABSTRACT

Education is the basis for the development of a society which plays a major role in the economic empowerment of a country, social development and the creation of human capital. Otherwise, it is considered a way to change the future. Costs of living and economic opportunities are closely related to how generations are educated. Albania is one of the countries of the Western Balkans, that has a high cost of education in the pre-university system compared to salaries in the country. Some of the students are forced to work part-time to supplement their income for education. Difficult economic conditions, high education costs and financial freedom are the three main factors that force teenagers to work. Expenses for school items, books and private courses in various subjects are among the main expenses that are not covered by the state. Young people feel deprived if their family fails to meet basic needs and are forced to meet them through part-time employment. The study method is descriptive. The samples were taken from high school students in several cities and rural areas of the country.



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1.1 Introduction

Albania is one of the Western Balkan countries with a relatively high cost of pre-university education. The cost of living and the prices of various items also affect the education of young Albanians. The state has a leading role in the education of the generations by contributing to the financial aspect by helping vulnerable groups, and families with economic and social problems. In the last ten years 2013-2023, the Albanian government has financed the field of education in the pre-university system, mainly in school articles by drafting support and economic policies for families in need. However, regardless of the efforts of the Albanian government, the cost of education remains relatively high as young Albanians spend more compared to living costs and salaries. This is one of the main reasons that prompts them to work part-time and full-time during the summer season. Exceptions are special cases where they are forced to leave school to meet the basic needs of life, and this generally happens in rural areas. Acquaintance with the world of work is seen as a positive aspect and experience in the future even for a part of young people who have good financial opportunities.

1.2 Study aim

This study aims to identify the cost of education for students in secondary schools

1.3 Research questions

How do family finances affect children's education?

1.4. Hypothesis

- Education costs are high because Albania has a high cost of living
- Family finances affect the education of young people in High school because young people are forced to participate in the labour market.

1.5 Study Contribution

- Government
- High school
- Researchers
- Students

The study will be important for the government, helping it design policies for students with financial difficulties and families in need. The contribution helps secondary schools to identify and specify students with economic difficulties and the reasons why they work. It also helps researchers highlight the problems of the pre-university system about the concentration and activation of students and regular school attendance. The search helps students express financial difficulties and reasons for employment.

Although the Albanian government has invested in the field of scientific research with a direct budget.

The budget is still not sufficient for it. The lack of literature is one of the main problems and some foreigners help with funds and equipment for research in Albania. The equipment with more laboratories, literature, and budget would significantly increase the level of scientific research in Albania. Compared to the countries of the region, it ranks penultimate, leaving behind Montenegro. Researchers encounter difficulties in finding literature and funding for scientific research such as this study, as no interest has been shown in such types of studies.

2.1 The role of education in the economy

The role of education is very important in strengthening the economy of a country, the more educated a nation is, the stronger its economy is, having a direct impact on the labor market, on its adaptation, income. finances and lifestyle (Radonshiqi. R. 2017). The human capital perspective views education as directly affecting labour productivity through the creation of skills. By creating skills that enhance labour productivity, education is seen as a force directly influencing economic activity and social welfare. The individual, therefore, views education as an investment (OECD 2007). Education also directly affects social life by forming individuals with a cultural potential sufficient to adapt to a life as productive as possible in all aspects of life., economic, social, cultural, Poverty and difficult economic conditions significantly affect education by leading to dropping out of school. The economic cause is closely related to the social causes, including the quality of the educational service (Moretti, E., 2004). In recent

years, the Albanian government has drafted educational policies that influence the awareness of young Albanians to pursue education and the path to success. Education strengthens the economy of a country by reducing the number of poverty and giving young people the opportunity to create well-being and a higher economic standard with their work and effort. Investments in education by the government are investments in human capital, income and the well-being of its citizens. Albanian youth need more financial, social and professional stability. It also needs a comfortable environment, support and stimulation from educational institutions, family and society. Professional promotion and growth gradually affect productive results in the labor market and living standards.

2.2 The pre-university system in Albania

The pre-university system is a non-mandatory system in the Republic of Albania. Is this education a worthwhile investment? Is education affordable for low-income families? The government should help more in financing education in the pre-university system.

Education is necessary to economic development. A good education leads to economic development. A balanced education system contributes to productivity, economic development and generates individual income per capita. Its influence is visible at the macro level of an individual family (Ozturk. Ilhan., 2001).

The cost of education has a direct impact on students, families and policymakers. However, the cost of education in public schools is more affordable than in private schools of the pre-university system. In public schools, students do not pay a registration or annual fee, while in private schools, students pay a fee of around 200 euros per month, and this depends on the type and quality of the school. However, public schools occupy the largest number of students, ranging from 65% public schools and 35% private schools and colleges. Students who graduate from college have an advantage over public secondary schools as they have more advantage in the labor market and come out more qualified and with higher results in the state matura examinations. This tendency to study in colleges is

growing more and more. Albanian institutions offer scholarships and financial aid for students with limited abilities and families with economic and social problems and students of excellence.

This category also benefits from the reimbursement of books every academic year.

Students who do not complete lower secondary education come from the poorest families. They could have taken a recompense to the child's earnings so that it is not necessary for children to be in child labor. The capacity of secondary education could be strengthened by splitting the financing from the purveyance of education in the form of public-private partnerships (UNICEF, 2017).

The Albanian government has increased the budget for education from year to year by investing in laboratories, technology, libraries and quality teaching conditions. But it is also important to distinguish how this cost is distributed in pre-university education; where is this money spent the most; and who covers these expenses for students of the pre-university system; The expenses are in school items, courses, public transport, school board, and food. This money is covered by the budget expenses of the student's families and the students themselves while working. Vulnerable strata and the Roma and Egyptian communities are very few in number who continue to high school even though they receive financial aid, but it is unaffordable for them, even some of them have a tendency to drop out of compulsory nine-year education. There is a powerful connection between the economic cost of education and the stand of parents toward child labour. Child labour is considered as the main prevailing problem in the economic sector of a country. Poverty is the main source of child labour. Because of poverty parents send their children to work. Poverty brings a high economic cost of education and this leads to a more commendatory viewpoint of parents towards child labor. The high economic cost of education becomes an unaffordable item for poor families (Mahnaz & Mariam, 2022).

The fact that Albania is a developing country and a candidate to become part of the European Union

affects the expenses of Albanian families to spend on foreign language courses, even though Albanian schools offer the teaching of two foreign languages, mainly English as the first language and alternatively any other language, such as Italian, German, French, Spanish. These courses have an additional monthly cost. Another cost is also the training that the students refer to the career counseling. Career counseling has not been given special importance by the Albanian government, this has led to inconsistencies with the labour market and the fields of study.

According to Ozturk. Ilhan (2001) the standard of education in countries with low and middle income is poor at all levels. Students in developing countries have an average level of achievement below that in developed countries and their performance shows a much greater disparity around the average.

Considering the problems and lack of clarity in the choices of professions and the labor market, Albanian students pay for training courses with career counselors, or in professional training centers for career counseling. The role and influence played by the school in career counseling is not at a high level and the lack of information has increased the demand for training in the career field. There are no career counselors funded by the government in Albanian high schools. Other additional expenses are clothing, food, sports, art, entertainment and excursions. These expenses are not financed by the state.

3.1 Education and Progress

Education is crucial for personal growth, societal progress, and economic development. It equips individuals with knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities, empowering them to make informed decisions and contribute meaningfully to society. Educational attainment plays an important role as well in the pattern of labour force participation over the lifecycle of an individual. Formal schooling beyond compulsory levels tends to be clustered during youth for several reasons (OECD, 2007) Education also promotes social cohesion, cultural understanding, and a foundation for a more equitable and just world. The cost of high education encompasses various factors, including resources, facilities, and personnel. Tuition,

textbooks, and extracurricular activities contribute to financial burdens on students and their families. Additionally, socioeconomic disparities can affect access to educational opportunities. Efficient allocation of resources, financial aid programs, and equitable policies are essential in addressing these challenges and ensuring that high-quality education remains accessible to all.

4.1 Labour market of young people

The importance of schooling and educational attainment of the labour force is being recognized as a factor that enhances labour market flexibility and facilitates structural adjustment OECD (1987b); OECD (1986b), as well as one which improves the adaptability of societies at large to the social, cultural and technological demands of the 21st Century OECD (1989c: 48).

Most of the young people are employed in the informal sector, which brings them no satisfaction. Employment is an important factor in the lives of these young people, as it fulfills basic needs, but often has a negative psychological effect. Lack of motivation for work, poor treatment by employers as they see them as temporary employees and lack of insurance are some of the factors that negatively affect the psychology of these young people. Often they face stress management problems during working hours, which leads to lower productivity and quality at work. Young people say that they need training from time to time to best adapt to the work environment, the staff, and the work. The workplace must be adapted to the nature of the work performed there. Another concern is safety in the workplace, since they are employed in the informal sector, some of them complain about safety and conditions in the workplace. The importance of personal protection is related to the totality of protective measures that the employee must ask the employer at any time. It is important to protect the rights and relations at work, between the two parties, the employer and the employee. The main focus should be the physical and mental integrity of the employees. This brings high levels of work and productivity in the economy of a country. Based on these factors, they also see informal employment at a young age as a modern challenge.

About 40% of young Albanians are employed part-time outside the educational process in the informal sector. The salary is minimal compared to the working hours, sometimes even lower than the minimum salary. The largest gender employed are men, where among the main jobs are waiter, receptionist and in the field of tourism. Most of the women work as sellers. The reasons for employment are the difficult economic conditions, without the opportunity to afford education, financial freedom and familiarity with the labor market. Financial problems including the cost of education lead, followed by financial freedom and familiarity with the labor market. Financial freedom and familiarity with and adaptation to the labor market is a positive aspects as young people value monetary income, manage their finances, be familiar with the labour market, and work culture and communicate with professionals and their evaluation.

5.1 Study Summary

Research Methodology

The study method is descriptive, the study method is interview. The samples were taken from high school students in several cities and rural areas of the country.

The questionnaire was conducted in Durres, Tirana, Elbasan, Vlora, Kukes, Shkodra.

What is your income level?

The income level of high school students is dominated by the average one, but there is also a high level and a low vital minimum, and this level is mainly in rural areas.

What are the reasons you work?

The reasons that work is; minimal living conditions and no possibility to meet basic needs; The cost of higher education including books and school supplies; financial freedom; they feel free to spend not only on basic needs or school items but also on additional things, including recreational activities outside of school.

Do you work full-time or part-time?

Teenagers work part-time outside school hours and in the summer season, most of them work full-

time, which they say helps them cope with the new academic year.

Do you spend a lot on school items?

Expenses for school items vary according to the needs during the year, but on average the expenses are average.

Do you spend on training courses?

The expenses for training courses or different subjects are high as they follow more than one course which can be foreign language, mathematics, physics, economics, biology, etc.

What are the training courses you follow?

Specific courses they attend are scientific subjects but also sports or art activities.

Have you felt bullied by economic inequality towards your friends?

Bullying is another factor that pushes them to work as they do not feel equal with their peers in terms of clothing, lack of extracurricular activities such as excursions.

6.1 Conclusions and Recommendations

- Education plays an important role in the development of a country such as; economic empowerment, social development and creation of human capital.
- Costs of living and economic opportunities are closely related to how generations are educated.
- Difficult economic conditions, education costs, special pieces of training or courses and financial freedom are the main factors that force teenagers to work.
- Also another factor is familiarity with and adaptation to the labour market.
- This makes them more capable and responsible for the value of work, money and also helps them more in choosing future professions and careers.

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