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The role of professional portfolio within verifying of unformal knowledge and work experience among the future seekers of first employment

Urša Šinkovec¹

Abstract

The main purpose of the paper is to contribute to a higher awareness of the role of professional portfolio in the process of seeking the first employment. This is one of the crucial topics that have to be addressed in efforts to decrease the level of unemployment.

The role of professional portfolio among the seekers of the first employment will be introduced. Professional portfolio is a summary folder of every individual that shows his/her level of qualification gained through (in)formal learning and work experiences.

In the paper the necessary theoretical groundwork from the sphere of using the professional portfolio and obstacles in employing young people will be presented. Then the methodological research framework with the interpretation of data acquired on basis of students' questionnaires will follow.

In general the paper presents one of possible solutions how to improve employment possibilities for seekers of first (new) employment.

Key words: *professional portfolio, informal learning and work experience, (un)employment, seekers of first employment*

Introduction

The problem that is constantly present at the labour force market is how to provide young seekers with their first employment. Despite the fact that every person needs some kind of formal education for getting employed, there should be paid much more attention to informal education and working experience.

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Using portfolio in verifying informal learning and work experiences could remove the barriers and be easier and cheaper way to give opportunity for young people, that can have even about 5-6 years of 'unofficial' working experiences at working force market entrance. Therefore professional portfolio is a powerful tool for entering the labour force market (Heath, 2002) which enables young people to display their achievements systematically on specific filed of knowledge or work experience. Professional portfolio can also be helpful for the employers, because they can get more realistic picture of individuals' qualification for work.

Who are the seekers of the first employment?

The competitiveness of Slovene economy depends on the quality of the working force. Thus a rapid economy growth is the biggest stimulation of employment.

As much as the thought written above is true, it is necessary to increase the portion of employment among young people. We are brought to this conclusion by statistical data RS (SURS, 2008a), which reveal 13% of unemployment among young people at the end of the year 2007. Moreover it has been exposed that the educational structure of unemployed people has changed in the last ten years. The degree of unemployment among more educated people is increasing. On the contrary among people with lower or middle education it is diminishing.

It is generally true that employers give advantage to candidates who fulfill additional employment conditions beside the educational term. Those supplementary conditions are working experience, knowledge of foreign language, mastering of computer programs and certain personal qualities such as communication skills, team work, capability of solving problems, leading a group of people, self-initiation.

Employers expect that the young candidates should be flexible, innovative, adaptable, dirigible and to have a positive relation to work. But at the same time they accuse the first employment seekers of lacking direct knowledge, working habits, motivation for work or studying and responsibility.

The politics of employment should be hand in hand with the politics of education. Together they should reinforce the growth of employment of young people by upgrading the standard of general education with key abilities, by detecting (revealing) and promoting the unformal knowledge and work experience and by accelerating lifelong learning.

The fact is that the young are a very vulnerable part of population that needs to be protected from social exclusion. That is why the politics of employment should dedicate it special care.

The uncertainty on the work market is one of young people's characteristics in Slovenia and Europe. That is why they are exposed to bigger risks of social exclusion and inequality in other domains of life.

The United Nations usually recognize the definition of »the young« formed in year 1985 during the international year of the youth as young people aged from 15 to 24. For the needs of this article we will use the definition of the Statistical office RS (SURS, 2007) which is shared with some of European countries. It defines the young aged from 15 to 29.

In this age group we also classify individuals who successfully finished or will finish a high school or university program and will face different problems when seeking their first employment.

Due to this reason in this group can be also classify individuals, who will obtain high technical or specific theoretical knowledge although as employer's state will be lack working experience. This is one of the main breaking facts of employment.

What needs to be accentuated is that Slovene students have a possibility to work through student services. The reasons why students decide to work are various (lodging expenses, travelling, saving..) but we must not forget that every job brings new experience and knowledge. That is why it is wrong to think that young people enter in the world of work without any experience or skill. On the other hand it is true that the student's work is not evidenced or verified. Thus for students the seeking for first employment is a transition where only few are resourceful.

The role of the professional portfolio

When enrolling for a job it is usually necessary to add an autobiography (Curriculum Vitae) and an attestation of the formal education. For the employer the information given by the degree is difficult to interpret. It usually reflects the degree of the individual's study success but it does not inform whether the candidate has the knowledge and skills that are required for the job (Wonacott, 2002).

When looking for a working relation the candidate points out every competence required from the employer. But the question is whether the candidate actually has the quoted knowledge. The employer can partially verify it during the interview or regular employment relationship with the candidate. Although the danger lies in the fact that the candidate can turn out to be incompetent. In that unpleasant situation the employer faces disappointment over the chosen candidate. On the other hand the candidate faces employment task he cannot overcome.

That is why we're looking for new ways that the first-employment seekers could use to make known their employers about the education degree and kinds of work experience they have. The idea using of portfolio in order to show individual's achievements isn't new. The name portfolio is an expression borrowed from the painters. They have always been collecting their pieces of art in big maps and often carried them around with the intention to sell them or to bring forward their talent (Jakara, 2000). Gradually the use of portfolio started to break through on other areas such as education and economy.

Portfolio or the personal map is a collection of individual's working experience that come into existence in a certain period of time followed by a reflexion about his work or achievements and planning further development. Professional portfolio demonstrates the author's technical knowledge, skills, dispositions and personal growth (Flowers idr. 2005; Wright,2001; Marilyn,2005). Because items are self-selected for inclusion, professional portfolio is a unique record of abilities and accomplishments (Heath, 2002). At the same time portfolio is a tool for self evaluation of one's achievements. At this point self-evaluation has an important role. Indeed if omitting this part we would be speaking

about a usual album instead of portfolio. Thus self-evaluation becomes an indispensable ingredient in developing a professional competence of a “thinking pro” (Marentič Požarnik and Peklaj, 2002 : 122,113).

We can say that the roles of the professional portfolio are multiple. It establishes and acknowledges learning acquired during the student’s work experience. As for the personal part of the portfolio, shows individual’s qualification in a certain domain. At the same time it also makes realize the individual about his informally acquired knowledge and skills.

The portfolio is also a way of strengthening one's self-confidence by exposing his achievements (internet 1) and raising motivation for further development. We must not forget that the portfolio directs the individual into a more active role in acquiring working experience and a higher level of independence when planning further professional way (internet 1).

Last but not the least; the portfolio introduces a review of individual’s knowledge and skills. Thus the seeker of the first employment gradually upgrades his autobiography. It is different from a standard autobiography by the types of supplements (self-evaluation, individual plan, letter of recommendation) and by the quality of given information about the candidate.

In order to obtain a valid and reliable judgement about individual’s knowledge and working experience it is important that the contents of the professional portfolio relies on different evidences about his progress gathered continuously in a given time in different ways. The better evidences the individual will choose, more reliable and valid will the judgement about his progress be (Sentočnik, 2004: 73). At this point it is important to stress that we must not be lead by the quantity but by the quality of working experience and knowledge.

The structure of the professional portfolio

Regardless of format or purpose, portfolios can be classified as: a presentation portfolio, a working portfolio and a learner portfolio (Dietz,

1994; Trškan 2004)². A presentation portfolio is the one that documents and showcases student's achievements, strengths and areas of expertise (Salend, 2001: 196). When using this type of showcase portfolio, there are no comparisons between entry-level work and expert performance by the student. Thus, the contents of this portfolio do not provide substantial evidence that training or work experience has had notable impact on the student – seekers of the first employment. On the other hand showcase portfolio should specify work samples that will be of interest to prospective employers and artefacts that are cognizant of the profession (Brown, 2002: 3, 5). A working portfolio is the one that contains items that are selected to conform to a set of prescribed competences and standards in order to respond to requirements for a particular employment. A third category is the learner (Dietz, 1994) or learning portfolio. The contents of this portfolio represent processes of cognitive growth, interrogation about the learning and work environment, self-assessment and transference of learning to the workplace (Brown, 2002).

Each of delineated types of portfolio has its pros and cons. That is why one tries to put his best product in it, his professional competences and also self-reflections and self-evaluation about knowledge, skills and achieved career goals.

A professional portfolio that incorporates self-reflection supports learning if the developmental nature of the portfolio (and work) process is sustained and provides opportunities for student to self-evaluate their own growth (Klenovski, 2002).

The fusion of those 3 types of portfolios has also the intention of giving a complete picture of the individual (seeker of the first employment) to a potential employer.

² Jakara (2000) divides the structure of portfolio in three units. The first part is where the elementary information about the individual are exposed (name, surname, date and place of birth, the address). In the second part there are all the oficial attestation of formal education and its course. It also enclose attestation of various courses and/or qualification. The third part contains various proof about payed or volonary working experience.

Nevertheless, the individual that is seeking for the first employment can share his/her professional portfolio with the potential employer at the interview. That will help the candidate to make a favourable impression and allow him/her to feel more comfortable (Salend, 2001).

The most important thing in the process of collecting proof about the individual's experience and knowledge is the authenticity of information. The second criterion is sufficiency. In other words there has to be enough information which reflects the candidate's professional qualification for the determined working place. Validity is also important in the way that the candidate still masters his knowledge and skills in the time when he applies for a job (Jakara, 2000).

The creation of any professional portfolio takes time. If not enough time and thought about the possible sections are devoted to make the portfolio than the final product will suffer. The decision to create a portfolio should not be made in haste, and the professional portfolio itself should not be made that way either (Marilyn, 2005).

Professional portfolio is a very flexible document. It is personalized by the individual seeker of first the employment. Therefore the items included and the organization of a professional portfolio will vary from individual to individual and will depend on the purpose or type of the portfolio. Although the portfolio should be structured to make it easy for others to follow, it can be organized in a variety of ways: chronologically, theme-based, items-based) (Salend, 2001). Klenovski (2002) emphasizes that the actual stress in developing professional portfolio is choosing evidence to illustrate professional competence and to give a favourable impression.

Title page – Introduction

The individual writes all the basic data in the first part of the portfolio. That is to say his name and surname, date and place of birth, his address. This part is about gathering elementary information about the individual.

In order to assist the reader (employer) in understanding the organization and the value of the portfolio, it is suggested that individual (owner of the portfolio) includes a table of contents. The table of contents also orients the reader to the range of items included in the professional portfolio as well as assists him in location of specific items of interest (Salend, 2001: 198).

Educational and Job-related Skills

The second part of the portfolio is made of two sections. The purpose of the first section is a historical review of the individual or » Background Information « (Salend, 2001 and Tarnowski, 1998). This section enables the reader to a closer examination of the candidate's professional skills, experiences and education. Background Information generally includes up-to date resume, education autobiography, diploma certification, letters of recognition and letters of recommendation (signed by previous employers or university teachers), statement of career goals (Tarnowski et al, 1998). This section of portfolio can also include a listing of hobbies, interests and special talents (Salend, 2001).

The second section is dedicated to individual's working experience. Potential employers concentrate mainly on the kind and quality of the candidate's working experience. Thus this part of the portfolio is intended to gather documentation and precise description of working experience that the individual obtained during his education. The description should be accurate, deepened and it should also expose candidate's responsibility towards work.

Personal attributes can be described through a portfolio in a way that is not easily accomplished with a resume (Tarnowski et al, 1998).

Reflective Thinking Skills

An integral aspect of a professional portfolio is the evidence of the individual's reflective thinking.

Self-reflection³ is a process of individual's independent judgement about his achievements of previously set goals (Razdevšek-Pučko, 1998). The individual evaluates his working experiences. Self-reflection is a process which actively includes the individual to feel his own »property« over the process of acquiring working experience and knowledge, and have bigger responsibility towards his own progress.

Professional portfolio must be more than an organized collection of artefacts. It must also indicate areas of proposed future growth based upon assessments of past performance and current strengths. These assessments are exhibited in the portfolio as reflections, and they are essential element of the complete portfolio. This aspect of the professional portfolio makes a powerful statement of individual professionalism (Heath, 2002).

The inclusion of portfolio items that reveal reflective thinking can demonstrate that owner of the portfolio is an ethical practitioner who continually examines the impact of his/her decisions and actions on himself/herself and others. In addition, examples of individual reflective thinking provide prospective employers with insights into how he/she learns from past experiences (Salend, 2001: 200).

Career development plans

In light of constant changes in everyday life, employers are looking for individuals who keep abreast of new developments in their professional field and continue to develop their skills by engaging in professional development activities. Therefore items that serve to document the individual's commitment of being a lifelong learner who takes advantage of opportunities to grow professionally should be included in the portfolio (Salend, 2001: 200).

³ The basic goal of self-reflection is the realisation of experiences, feelings, thoughts and handling with purpose that the individual is capable of facing with a new experience and help himself with a wider range of information, knowledge and skills (Sentočnik, 2004).

Methodology

In our research we will try to show the actual state in the field of acquiring unformal working experience among the risk group of the young in Slovenia. With the help of questionnaire, we will demonstrate that students acquire professional knowledge through the work obtained by the student's employment agency. This group of students are the future first employment seekers who will successfully conclude the formal education and will then be aged from 24 to 27. Therefore they will not enter the work market without certain skills which they are expected to have. Students are usually not aware of their acquired unformal knowledge and working experience and that is why they don't register them.

Description of the pattern

The pattern has been chosen among the students of Slovene universities. It is occasional and is made of 306 students aged from 18 to 27. It includes 90 men (29,4%) and 216 women (70,6%). Therefore there are 291 (95,15%) regular students and 25 (4,9%) extraordinary program students. The basic population embraces 89.593 students (SURS, 2008b). On the basis of this data we can say that the pattern is big enough to enable us to conclude about the entire population because of the high statistical reliability.

Description of the primary research method

For the collection of data we've used a questionnaire which contains questions about the kinds and of ways of obtaining working experience. It also contains question about their documentation. The questionnaire has first been made in an experimental form and then tested in a practical way. A preliminary test has been made with draught of the questionnaire. Five students from different universities responded to the test. After the test we've made an interview with those students. Another test questionnaire was made on the basis of the interviews, filled in by five students. None of the students had difficulty in answering the questions and had no need for supplementary explanation.

The inquiry contains 15 yes/no questions. The first part of the questionnaire is destined to elementary information about student's age, sex, year and kind of study. The second part is destined to establish the main reasons why students obtain work through student's services and the use they make of the money they earn. A set of questions are also about the frequency of work. The last part contains questions about acquiring various experiences and the way they get documented.

Collecting information

2100 questionnaires were distributed. 1050 were sent by mail to various student services all over Slovenia. 1050 were distributed in various universities. Only 54 questionnaires were sent back to us by mail (50 were fulfilled and 4 incomplete). That is 4,8% of response. We got more information on universities. 256 students (24, 2%) fulfilled the questionnaire. The collecting of data went on from February to March 2008.

Presentation of data

Table 1: Student age structure considering the year of study

Student age considering the year of study	Year of study				Total
	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year	
18 years	1	1	0	0	2
19 years	37	2	1	0	40
20 years	25	40	0	0	65
21 years	8	25	38	1	72
22 years	8	20	23	12	63
23 years	2	6	7	13	28
24 years	2	3	5	5	15
25 years	2	0	1	11	14
26 years	0	1	0	5	6
27 years	0	0	0	1	1
Total	85	98	75	48	306
	27,8%	32,0%	24,5%	15,7%	100,0%

Students in the age group from 18 to 27 years, who were attending 1st – 4th year of undergraduate study during the time of the poll, are the sample. For easier presentation of following data, we have divided them into years of study considering their age. So in the 1st year of study we have students from 18 to 20 years old. In the 2nd year of study we have individuals in the age group between 20 and 22 years. Third group are students between 21 and 22 years old. Fourth group is comprised of students between 22 and 27 years of age. Age groups overlap each other because of different times of enrolment into study process and due to different speed of advancement of students between years of study. Based on Pearson correlation coefficient (0.647) we can, considering 1% statistical error, assert there is a strong linear correlation between the age of students and the year of study they are attending.

Table 2: Reasoning behind the decision to work with mediation of a student employment service.

Reasoning behind the decision to work with mediation of a student employment service considering the year of study.		Main reasons behind the decision to work with mediation of a student employment service.				Total
		Acquiring new working experience	Possibility of regular employment	Improving one's economic situation	Establishing career contacts	
1 st year	Count	26	2	55	2	85
	Percent	30,6%	2,4%	64,7%	2,4%	100,0 %
2 nd year	Count	32	3	61	2	98
	Percent	32,7%	3,1%	62,2%	2,0%	100,0 %
3 rd year	Count	21	2	48	4	75
	Percent	28,0%	2,7%	64,0%	5,3%	100,0 %
4 th year	Count	19	2	25	2	48
	Percent	39,6%	4,2%	52,1%	4,2%	100,0 %
Total	Count	98	9	189	10	306
	Percent	32,0%	2,9%	61,8%	3,3%	100,0 %

One of the fundamental questions, that appear is why one should work in the time of study. Improving one's economic situation (61.8%) and acquiring new working experience (23%) are key reasons for work with mediation of a student employment service, for the majority of the students taking part in the poll. Establishing career contacts through various student jobs becomes more of a decision factor among students of 3rd and 4th year of study, when students are faced with a question, what to do after graduation. Throughout all 4 years of study almost none of the students, taking part in the poll, see their work with mediation of a student employment service as a potential regular employment

Table 3: Amount of time devoted for student work.

Frequency of work considering year of study.		Frequency of work				Total
		Weekly	Monthly	Student holidays	Regular work	
1 st year	Count	8	15	40	21	84
	% within year	9,5%	17,9%	47,6%	25,0%	100,0%
	% within frequency	28,6%	21,1%	31,3%	26,9%	27,5%
2 nd year	Count	13	26	38	21	98
	% within year	13,3%	26,5%	38,8%	21,4%	100,0%
	% within frequency	46,4%	36,6%	29,7%	26,9%	32,1%
3 rd year	Count	4	17	39	15	75
	% within year	5,3%	22,7%	52,0%	20,0%	100,0%
	% within frequency	14,3%	23,9%	30,5%	19,2%	24,6%
4 th year	Count	3	13	11	21	48
	% within year	6,3%	27,1%	22,9%	43,8%	100,0%
	% within frequency	10,7%	18,3%	8,6%	26,9%	15,7%
Total	Count	28	71	128	78	305
	% within year	9,2%	23,3%	42,0%	25,6%	100,0%
	% within frequency	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

42% of all students decide to work in the time of summer holidays that, in average, last three months. Mainly the students of 1st year (47.6%),

2nd year (38.8%) and 3rd year (52%) decide to work during summer holidays. These age groups namely have little time to work during winter and summer semester, because they mainly attend classes at their college or study in the student libraries

Decision to work full-time is mainly made by the students of 4th year (43.8%) that are slowly finishing their formal education process and are passing over into the process of finding their first regular employment.

A bit less frequent is a decision for short time student work with students of 1st (9.5%) and 2nd year (13.3%) as well as the students of 3rd (5.3%) and 4th year (6.3%). This is the basis for a conclusion that, students are seeking for relatively stable sources of income and not only occasional honorary work.

Students of the 1st year spend their money earned by student work to cover the cost of residence during the time of study (52.9%), which is in accordance with previous finding from Table 2. 23.5% of the 1st year students spend their money earned with student work for travel while 17.6% of 1st year students are able to begin the process of independence with the money they earn. Among the 2nd year students the fashion of spending money earned with student work is similar to that of 1st year students. 53.1% of 2nd year students use their money to pay for their residence, 20.4% spend the money for travel during study holidays. To 18.4% of the students taking part in the poll the money earned is means for independence. Students enrolled into 3rd year of study mainly use their earned money (58.7%) to cover the cost of residence.

Deviations appear among the students of 4th year who, spend their money earned with student work not only for residence (39.6%), travel (29.2%), independence (18.8%), but also for formal and informal education (10.4), for which they assess, are of key importance when seeking for regular employment. This proves disposition of funds for additional education between each year, because in the entire sample of the survey, 4th year students account for 45.5% of the money spent for additional education.

Table 4: Principal manners of spending money earned with student work.

Expenditure of money considering year of study.		Expenditure of money earned						Total
		Cost of residence	Travel	Education	Mutual Funds	Study abroad	Independence	62
1st year	Count	45	20	2	3	0	15	85
	% within year	52,9%	23,5%	2,4%	3,5%	0,0%	17,6%	100,0%
	% within money expenditure	28,1%	28,6%	18,2%	23,1%	0,0%	29,4%	27,8%
2nd year	Count	52	20	2	6	0	18	98
	% within year	53,1%	20,4%	2,0%	6,1%	0,0%	18,4%	100,0%
	% within money expenditure	32,5%	28,6%	18,2%	46,2%	0,0%	35,3%	32,0%
3rd year	Count	44	16	2	3	1	9	75
	% within year	58,7%	21,3%	2,7%	4,0%	1,3%	12,0%	100,0%
	% within money expenditure	27,5%	22,9%	18,2%	23,1%	100,0%	17,6%	24,5%
4th year	Count	19	14	5	1	0	9	48
	% within year	39,6%	29,2%	10,4%	2,1%	0,0%	18,8%	100,0%
	% within money expenditure	11,9%	20,0%	45,5%	7,7%	0,0%	17,6%	15,7%
Total	Count	160	70	11	13	1	51	306
	% within year	52,3%	22,9%	3,6%	4,2%	0,3%	16,7%	100,0%
	% within money expenditure	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	% of Total	52,3%	22,9%	3,6%	4,2%	0,3%	16,7%	100,0%

Table 5: Importance of correlation between student work and students formal education.

Correlation between student work and student's formal education considering year of study.		Work in correlation with education				Total
		Never	Regularly	Often	Always	
1st year	Count	11	53	19	2	85
	% within year	12,9%	62,4%	22,4%	2,4%	100,0%
	% within correlation between work and education	34,4%	30,6%	20,7%	22,2%	27,8%
2nd year	Count	15	54	28	1	98
	% within year	15,3%	55,1%	28,6%	1,0%	100,0%
	% within correlation between work and education	46,9%	31,2%	30,4%	11,1%	32,0%
3rd year	Count	4	45	22	4	75
	% within year	5,3%	60,0%	29,3%	5,3%	100,0%
	% within correlation between work and education	12,5%	26,0%	23,9%	44,4%	24,5%
4th year	Count	2	21	23	2	48
	% within year	4,2%	43,8%	47,9%	4,2%	100,0%
	% within correlation between work and education	6,3%	12,1%	25,0%	22,2%	15,7%
Total	Count	32	173	92	9	306
	% within year	10,5%	56,5%	30,1%	2,9%	100,0%
	% within correlation between work and education	100,0 %	100,0%	100,0 %	100,0%	100,0%

Regardless of the year of study, when deciding for student work, is for students often or always crucial, that the work they decide for is connected to their field of formal education and their desired profession.

On top of that it is necessary to emphasize there is a statistically positive linear correlation between seeking for work tied to the education process and the importance of gaining experience for the student. Pearsons correlation coefficient is 0,265 with 1% statistical error. This means that students, who value the meaning of work experience highly, seek jobs tied to their formal education.

Data acquired shows that students in 1st and 2nd year of study decide to work with mediation of a student employment service also in eventuality the work is not directly tied to their study process or work they are educating for. This can be explained in a way that students, at the beginning of the study, are focusing mainly on acquiring financial means, while students nearing graduation are more concerned with continuation of their professional careers after graduation.

Also, the analysis of decisions for jobs not tied to formal education shows that 1st and 2nd year students account for a vast majority (81.3%) of all students that choose jobs not tied to their formal education.

Table 6: Key factors when deciding for student work.

Factors of decision for a job considering year of study.	Factors influencing job choice						
	Earning	Experience	Location of company	Working hours	Job duration	Work satisfaction	Company successfulness
1 st year	44	8	5	8	1	15	3
	52,4%	9,5%	6,0%	9,4%	1,2%	17,9%	3,6%
2 nd year	52	14	9	12	5	16	4
	53,1%	14,4%	9,4%	12,5%	5,3%	16,5%	4,2%
3 rd year	32	20	9	9	3	13	2
	42,7%	27,0%	12,2%	12,3%	4,1%	17,6%	2,7%
4 th year	21	10	0	4	3	10	0
	44,7%	20,8%	0,0%	8,5%	6,4%	21,3%	0,0%
Total	149	52	23	33	12	54	9
	49,0%	17,2%	7,7%	11,0%	4,0%	17,9%	3,0%

Prevailing factor influencing individual student choice of job with mediation of a student employment service are wages. Higher the year of study, lower the percentage because of other factors, namely importance of gaining various work experience and work knowledge and work satisfaction. Latter especially stands out at students of 3rd and 4th year. In the scope of full sample of the students job duration has lowest influence on the choice of job.

It is also important to point out there is a statistically distinctive negative linear correlation between importance of gaining work experience and importance of wages for an individual student. Pearsons correlation coefficient is -0.240 with 1% statistical error. This means that for students that value the meaning of gaining work experience highly the financial aspect of student work is not the main factor when deciding for student work.

There is also a statistically distinctive negative linear correlation between importance of gaining work experience and job duration. Pearsons correlation coefficient is -0.264 with 1% statistical error.

Statistically distinctive negative linear correlation appears between importance of gaining work experience and importance of working hours. Pearsons correlation coefficient is -0.246 with 1% statistical error.

That is why for students that value jobs, gaining them new working experience, highly, time limitations, respectively duration of work (day, week, month), working hours and the wages are not key factors when choosing a job to work in, with mediation of a student employment service.

Between categories describing areas where the students are supposed to have gained majority of their work experience working with mediation of a student employment service, administrative work is predominant in all years of study. Share of students doing administrative work diminishes between students of 2nd year (29.3%) and 3rd year (28.8). Besides administrative work young people enrolled into 2nd year of study decide for jobs tied with sale and marketing of products.

Table 7: Most frequently chosen student jobs.

Field of gaining experience considering year of study.	Field of gaining majority of work experience							
	Administrative work	Moving furniture	Sale Marketing	Teaching	Translation	Service	Physical work	Other
1 st year	29	2	18	5	2	11	11	8
	39,2%	3,4%	26,5%	7,8%	3,2%	16,2%	17,2%	30,8%
2 nd year	24	4	33	7	0	10	16	8
	29,3%	6,3%	42,3%	10,3%	0,0%	15,2%	22,5%	34,8%
3 rd year	17	0	9	17	4	6	13	9
	28,8%	0,0%	18,0%	32,1%	8,9%	12,0%	23,2%	45,0%
4 th year	13	3	12	4	3	2	4	9
	31,7%	10,7%	31,6%	11,8%	10,3%	6,5%	13,3%	42,9%
Total	83	9	72	33	9	29	44	34
	32,4%	4,7%	30,8%	15,1%	4,5%	13,5%	19,9%	37,8%

As well as 2nd year students the 3rd year students choose administrative work as one of the most often chosen areas of work (28.8%). 3rd year students gain majority of work experience and informal education by teaching (32.1%) (Foreign languages, natural science subjects etc.). Results gathered with the survey shown in Table 9 show, that 4th year students have, during the course of their study, acquired various work experience and informal knowledge in all fields quoted above.

In case the students were unable to find a suitable job description among offered categories, they could write down their own student job, where they gained majority of experience and informal knowledge into the “other” category. Most often mentioned student jobs there were: child animation and care (5), graphic design (4), easy physical work (5), product promotion (6), cleaning (3), field work (3).

Table 8: Role of experience and knowledge gained with student work when seeking employment

Importance of experience when seeking regular employment considering year of study		Importance of experience and informal knowledge			Total
		Yes	No	Don't know	
1st year	Count	57	28	0	85
	% within year	67,1%	32,9%	0,0%	100,0%
2nd year	Count	60	37	1	98
	% within year	61,2%	37,8%	1,0%	100,0%
3rd year	Count	43	32	0	75
	% within year	57,3%	42,7%	0,0%	100,0%
4th year	Count	31	16	1	48
	% within year	64,6%	33,3%	2,1%	100,0%
Total	Count	191	113	2	306
	% within year	62,4%	36,9%	0,7%	100,0%

62.4% of students taking part in the poll means the work experience and informal knowledge gained with student work will help them when seeking their (first) regular employment. In the survey we asked the students to further substantiate and explain their answer and on the basis of written explanations we can ascertain that 21 students (from the pool of those, attributing important role of work experience and skilfulness gained with student work) realize the potential employers expect/demand a certain level of capacity and experience for quality work, from the candidates for the job. According to the opinion of the students taking part in the survey, the aforementioned work experience can only be gained if the individual is working in an area closely tied to their field of student's formal education (study program).

Opinion of (30 students) also exposes itself. The individual with a variety of student jobs will have an easier task of finding employment and adapting to work environment after graduation, because the student deciding to work with mediation of a student employment service establishes contacts with potential employers.

Large group of 80 students taking part in the poll perceives work with mediation of a student employment service as a chance to gain work experience and knowledge and an opportunity to develop their skill of communication, work habits, teamwork, organizational skill etc. Students see their development and perfection of their own social capital as means to increase self-confidence and improve competitive position. Students taking part in the survey regard their work with mediation of a student employment service as help at identifying their own weak and strong abilities and also as help for easier recognition of professional areas that have a lot of potential to be (very) successful. On top of that 6 students expressed belief, that formal education on colleges only yields theoretical knowledge, which in conjunction with graduation does not satisfy desires and expectations of potential employers. That is why they think the formal knowledge must be refined with practical experience and abilities that can be gained with student work. As long as the chosen job is appropriate (in sync with study).

36.9% of the students are certain that experience and knowledge gained by working with mediation of a student employment service do not help when seeking first regular employment. Majority of those (72 students) explain their answer with the fact the work they do is not in any connection with their field of study at all and consequently, they are not gaining any kind of relevant competence. For those the key factor when deciding or choosing a student job is a wish for fast money or improving of their financial situation. Students attribute minor importance of experience and knowledge to the student work because of the type of jobs provided by a student employment services (easy physical work, promotions, making surveys, etc.) that are not as important and do not give opportunity for regular employment.

Staggering is the information that vast majority (73.2%) of the students taking part in the poll do not annotate their work experience and knowledge gained during the course of performing various student jobs. Reasons for this can be found in the unawareness of importance of annotation of work experience and knowledge. This can especially be a problem later, when as seekers of first employment they wish to enrich their CV with all the tasks performed but they cannot acquire verified certificates for the work done in the past.

Table 9: Amount of student work experience annotation.

Work annotation year of study	experience considering	Work experience annotation		Total
		Yes	No	
1 st year	Count	24	61	85
	% within year	28,2%	71,8%	100,0%
2 nd year	Count	20	78	98
	% within year	20,4%	79,6%	100,0%
3 rd year	Count	19	56	75
	% within year	25,3%	74,7%	100,0%
4 th year	Count	19	29	48
	% within year	39,6%	60,4%	100,0%
Total	Count	82	224	306
	% within year	26,8%	73,2%	100,0%

Among all the students in the survey the most common manner of annotating the work experience and knowledge is a CV (48.8%). Documenting acquired competences in a shape of a CV increases with each year in college. Percentile share of the students that consistently annotate newly gained knowledge is highest (89.5%) among the students enrolled into 4th year in study year 2007/2008.

Reverse phenomenon appears when annotating work experience and knowledge gained with student work by writing a work journal. 1st year students use the journal to annotate their work experience (50%) rather than CV. Only rare students (4.2%) own Nefiks. Use of journal to annotate new work experience and knowledge declines with regard to years of study, so that in the 4th year only 10.5% of the students use it.

Table 10: Principal methods of annotating work experience gained with student work

Method of annotating work experience considering year of study		Method of annotating work experience				Total
		CV	Work journal	Nefiks ⁴	Other ⁵	
1 st year	Count	8	12	1	3	24
	% within year	33,3%	50,0%	42%	12,5%	100,0%
2 nd year	Count	7	8	3	2	20
	% within year	35,0%	40,0%	15,0%	10,0%	100,0%
3 rd year	Count	8	6	4	1	19
	% within year	42,1%	31,6%	21,1%	5,3%	100,0%
4 th year	Count	17	2	0	0	19
	% within year	89,5%	10,5%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total	Count	40	28	8	6	82
	% within year	48,8%	34,1%	9,8%	7,3%	100,0%

⁴Partner program of a youth organization Društvo mladinski ceh and Slovenian Office of Youth that in its foundation strives toward more recognition to informal education of young people. The education can take place on different levels and in organization of various institutions. Nefiks is an index, or a systemic tool for systematic annotation of (in)formal education for young people from 14th year of age and older. There is no desire to replace formal education with Nefiks index, but to achieve complementation of formal, informal and occasional learning. Six different areas of knowledge can be registered in the index: acquiring knowledge with active citizenship and responsible project work, acquiring knowledge with work (work with mediation of a student employment service), acquiring knowledge in organized forms of education (courses and seminars), acquiring knowledge in camps and with volunteer work, acquiring experience abroad and other ways of acquiring knowledge (internet).

⁵ While doing the survey we allowed for a possibility of other manners of work experience annotation. That is why, on the final question, we made possible for students taking part in the survey to write their own way of documenting their knowledge, experience and abilities gained with student work. In the scope of students that annotate their work experience and informal knowledge six students have marked the answer "other" and written down their own way of annotation. When analyzing the information we ascertained they used a synonym for answers already offered, which is additionally alarming because not only, that a small percentage annotates their work experience, but even do not recognize the synonyms for respective activity.

It is important to point out there is a middle strong statistically distinctive negative linear correlation between manner of annotation of work experience of individual students and years of study. Pearsons correlation coefficient is -0.320 with 1% statistical error. This means that students annotate their competences and informal knowledge, gained with work with mediation of a student employment service more consistently, with gradual advancement into higher years of study.

Conclusion

The majority of potential job seekers among students taking part in the survey (62.4%) realize that employers attach great significance to work experience and formal knowledge of the candidate. According to the opinion of the students taking part in the survey they realize that the potential employers expect or even demand a certain level of capacity and experience for quality work, from the candidates for the job. Students are also aware of the fact that an individual worked variety of student jobs will have an easier task of finding employment and adapting to work environment after graduation. Nevertheless, students taking part in the survey regard their work experience, gained with the mediation of a student employment service, as a help at identifying their own weak and strong working abilities. That is why 56.5% of the students in the survey try to find work which is directly tied to the field of their formal education.

Despite their awareness about the meaning of work experience and informal education individuals gain by working with mediation of a student employment service when seeking first regular employment, almost half the students taking part in the survey (49%) choose jobs that allow them to make good money in a short period of time. Therefore it is not a surprise that 52.3% of students engaged in the survey use the earned money to cover their living costs during the time of study or for improving personal financial situation and only a few (3.6%), use the money for additional (professional) education.

17.2% of the students taking part in the survey decide for the job only if they can gain work experience and abilities relevant for employment after graduation. That is why we are allowed to conclude that, when deciding for student work, students taking part in the survey see the

importance of gaining new work experience and informal knowledge as secondary to quick earnings.

That is why we need to start solving unemployment problem among young people after college graduation, while those people are still in school, when the potential first employment seeker should either receive professional counselling about planning one's professional path (recognizing values and viewpoints, assessment of internal impediments and accepting decisions for the future) or the possibility to annotate and thus keep record of work experience and informal knowledge, which are increasingly a more decisive factor at employment. Young people that will enter (are already entering) the workforce market can have a number of informal work experiences and competences, gained with working by mediation of a student employment service. But those work experience and informal knowledge are not annotated or verified, so potential employers do not consider them as proof of individual's work capacity. The fact that 73.2% of the students in the survey do not document their work experience and gained knowledge is surprising. According to the level of awareness about the importance of work experience when seeking for first regular employment, a larger percentage of students annotating their competences would be expected. Exactly the latter is the main goal of a professional portfolio, namely to present a candidate and his past achievements as thoroughly as possible.

One of the positive elements of professional portfolio is to provide candidate's personal written record proving his capacity and to shed a light on his informal knowledge and abilities, even such one does not realize one has attained. It raises and strengthens potential employment seeker's self-confidence and encourages and motivates him for further development on his or hers professional career path (Jakara, 2000).

The question remains if we can use professional portfolio for documenting and illustrating individual's progress in the field of professional growth? By doing so, employers and (consequently) students have to acknowledge the importance of students work experiences gained with working by mediation of a student employment service and recognize them in the process of employment. Furthermore, (in)formal knowledge and work experience gained in the time of formal education should be captured in a form that transparently expresses

individuals professional competences. With professional portfolio this aim can be achieved especial if portfolio is designed in electronic form. Electronic portfolio (e-portfolio) is cheaper and simpler from the distribution point of view - quicker. Electronic portfolio can, in comparison to traditional one or CV, support complex organization of individual's documents. Main deficiency of a classical portfolio is in the fact, that its content is introduced in a linear fashion to the potential employer. In the case of e-portfolio the students can organize the data either in a one-way sequence or in hierarchic relation. E-portfolio can be stored on a digital medium like a CD, DVD or a USB key, which enables for easier and simultaneous accessibility and distribution of individual's folder to a greater number of potential employers.

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