



CHALLENGES TO INCLUSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN STUDY/RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

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Abstract:

Research activities proved to be the main pillar in every development and transformational process for every society, especially for the student development and transformation process. This research inquires the existing state of scientific research in higher education in Kosovo. In the process, it attempts to understand the problems and difficulties in this field, as well as the ways to improve the existing state. Main purpose for this research was to draw conclusions and important information in relation to the size of academic and scientific research of higher education students in Kosovo, as well as the importance and the use of results of these researches in practice, including identification of existing problems and recommended appropriate alternative resolutions. Current conditions, especially in relation to investments in the field of student research in Kosovo, are not favorable, also, a general absence of research activities or relevant research activities is noticed, while the improvements in this field may produce extraordinary economic and social effects. Based on the research results, series of causes were identified, starting from the financial and lack of human resources. The purpose of this research is to serve as a platform for discussion and change in decision-making approach and processes in respective public and private institutions in relation to research.

Keywords: research activities, students, higher education, challenges

1. Introduction

Today, academic or science research is considered essential for the general progress and development for every society. Naturally, Kosovo society is not an exemption to this. In

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this context, having in mind the general political and social state of scientific research in higher education in recent years, it is of great interest to present the state of scientific research in higher education in Kosovo.

Base on literature, having in mind the general political and social context in place in Kosovo in the last decade in XX century, or even earlier, it is considered that then state in this aspect was devastating and under every level. However, after 1999, new circumstances were created in Kosovo which apparently created a more suitable environment for scientific work and research.

However, how much was this new opportunity utilized and what was the impact in stimulating the student research work in Kosovo?

Research-scientific activity is of special interest and an integral part in the international research domain. According to research, research-scientific activity in Kosovo is in disastrous state and responsible structures consider that all fields require improvements, in order to later differentiate the fields where greater contribution can be expected. Based on the Strategy On Scientific/Artistic Research And Development Activities 2013-2016 (2012), in order to provide a resolution for existing problems for respective development, and greater approximation of learning-research ration, responsible structures are committed to increase student intensity in activities in this field. Implementation of research projects itself in fact represents a challenge, since support structures are not functioning properly or are missing.

2. Literature Review

Literature review provides that research is considered basic and irreplaceable, not only for their existence as such, but also for the benefit of the society as a whole.

The purpose of scientific research as systematic research work is research and development of new knowledge, their use and implementation in practice. Pursuant to the Draft Law for Scientific Research Activities, Innovation and Technology (2004), one of the primary goals of research-scientific activities is empowering the staff for research and scientific work and publication of their results as well as the transfer of knowledge and technology.

In efforts to improve the research-scientific and development activities in Kosovo, document "Strategy on scientific/artistic research and development activities 2013-2016" is considered a result of a very wide participation of experts coming from different academic fields. According to (SSARDA, 2012), first step in developing the strategic document was the analysis of the state, which was conducted in four fields: Human Resources, Infrastructure, International Cooperation, Relation to Economy and Society. The Strategy for "Creating Conditions and Instruments for Research and

Development and Stimulate Cooperation in the Field of Higher Education and Economy” is committed to provide specific support to academic units, research groups and individuals making studies in these fields.

Pursuant to the Draft Law For Scientific Research Activities, Innovation And Technology (2004:11), Guiding Principles supporting science and research, technology and innovation in the Republic of Kosovo, are especially: 1.1.Freedom of science and academic teaching, 1.2.Plurality of possibilities and scientific methods, 1.3.Importance of science and research, technology and innovation for society and economy, 1.4.Research cooperation between universities and non-university institutions, 1.5.Cooperation between state and other institutions, regulated by law; 1.6.International research cooperation, in particular that European, 1.7.Provision of adequate means for science and research, technology and innovation; 1.8.Equal treatment of male and Female; 1.9.Systematic use of assessment and monitoring of programs, instruments, initiatives, research measures and of economic development; 1.10.Public work with state interest; 1.11.Ethics and responsibility of scientific workers and researchers on the outcome of his work; 1.12.The care for protection of the vital environment and cultural heritage. Although the Strategy regulates a wide scope of fields in the domain of scientific research, only some aspects of the Strategy are presented here, the purpose of which was to address problems and challenges for junior and senior experts in the entire academic community of Kosovo through informal discussions (Regional research, 2013)

According to this Strategy, one of the highlighted challenges in relation to research, the analysis notes following difficulties: lack of financing, inadequate research capacities, insufficient and dysfunctional research centers, ineffective project management structures, insufficient and old book and journal collections in university libraries, lack of diversity of courses, lack of courses and adequate staff for scientific research methods.

In fact, during the last two decades, main challenges remain to be small number of students involved in research fields, compared to other peers in Europe and wider, which brought development of different levels of research structures (Peshkepia, 2012).

3. Research Methodology

With the purpose of identifying existing/current problems in involving students in scientific research, we have used: qualitative and quantitative methods. Participants involved in the research are several universities in Kosovo: University of Mitrovica, University of Pristina and Business College in Vushtrri. Quantitative data were

processed using the SPSS statistical method. The following statistical parameters were used: average, standard deviation, correlation ratio and cronbach alpha.

A. Participants

200 students were involved in the study, out of which 42% females and 58% males. The questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The survey was conducted with 200 questionnaires which contain 4 questions. Survey questions were open and closed.

B. Instruments: questionnaires and interviews.

C. Codification of data: 42% females, 58% males, urban areas,

While the current state of scientific research is at a unsatisfactory level, being an issue which was widely covered until now, there is a greater need for research aiming to understand the current situation and bring as much as possible information to identify existing problems.

3.2 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to draw important conclusions and information in relation to size of academic or scientific research in higher education in Kosovo, as well as importance and practical use of results from such research, including identification of existing problems with the goal of appropriate alternative finding resolution.

4. Results and Discussion

With the purpose of identifying student integration in scientific research, we used the average, standard deviation, correlation ratio and Cronbach alpha. Results for question "What do you think, what is the contribution of Kosovo students in research activities?", in Table 1, show that the largest number of surveyed, respectively 46% consider that Kosovo students do not contribute at all in research activities, 36% consider average and 18% of the surveyed marked fully. Average and standard deviation was calculated and it results to be 1.72 (DS=.75)

As highlighted in literature sources, academic/scientific research is essential in overall progress and development of every student and society in general.

Table 1: Student answers for question:

What do you think, what is the contribution of Kosovo students in research activities?

Answer	%	Ma	DS
None	46		
Average	36		
Fully	18		
Total	100	1.72	(.75)

From student answers, based on table 2, we can see that 11% students consider that very often they published a research paper, while 32% consider average and 56% of students marked never. According to results, average and standard deviation is 1.54 (DS=.68).

Table 2: Student answers to question:

You as a student did you ever publish a research paper in local or foreign journals?

Answer	%	Ma	DS
Never	56	1.54	(.68)
Sometimes	32		
Often	11		
Total	100		

For the question “*What do you think, what is the importance of greater student inclusion in scientific research?*” in Table 3, out of 200 students, 43% of surveyed students think fully, 29% have marked average, whilst 27% of students consider not at all. According to results, average and standard deviation is 2.16; (DS.82).

Table 3: Student answers to question:

What do you think, what is the importance of greater student inclusion in scientific research?

Answers	%	Ma	DS
Not at all	27	2.16	(.82)
Average	29		
Fully	43		
Total	100		

Also from Table 4 the correlation ratio between the variable “*What is the contribution of Kosovo students in research activities?*” and “*You as a student did you ever publish a research paper in local or foreign journals?*” results at $r=.863^{**}$, $p<.000$. Those two variables correlate positively and have statistical importance.

While the correlation ratio between the variable “*What is the contribution of Kosovo students in research activities?*” and “*What is the importance of greater student inclusion in scientific research?*”, in Table 4 shows a positive relation and important statistics which stand at $r=.806^{**}$, $p<.000$. studying the literature shows that in general there is no systematic data or statistics in relation to academic publications and results in higher education in Kosovo.

The correlation ratio between the variable: “*You as a student did you ever publish a research paper in local or foreign journals?*” and “*What is the importance of greater student*

inclusion in scientific research?" was also analyzed, and according to results in Table 4 it is $r=.809^{**}$, $p<.000$. Being a positive and statistically important relation.

In order to assess the reliability of instruments, Cronbach alpha was used which for all three variables provides a high value for ratio .930.

Table 4: Correlation and Cronbach alpha values for survey results

Variables	Correlation	Cronbach alpha
"What is the contribution of Kosovo students in research activities?" and "You as a student did you ever publish a research paper in local or foreign journals?"	.863**	.930
"What is the contribution of Kosovo students in research activities?" and "What is the importance of greater student inclusion in scientific research?"	.806**	
"You as a student did you ever publish a research paper in local or foreign journals?" and "What is the importance of greater student inclusion in scientific research?"	.809**	

Question "What do you think, what are the main factors preventing student research in Kosovo?" a series of factors were identified, starting from the ones of financial nature and up to human resources. In fact, such findings are present in other analyzed relevant documents, including the report of the European Commission (2012) for Kosovo, where main challenges in the field of research remain to be the lack of qualified scientific personnel, small number of students in doctoral studies, insufficient laboratory equipment and inadequate techniques.

From student answers, one of the factors preventing research work is considered to be the insufficient knowledge of English by Kosovo students.

4.1 Some of the causes or factors for difficult situation of research work in Kosovo

Study literature also considers the *lack of budget* for research as the primary or main cause for the grave state in the field of research in higher education in Kosovo. In fact, the majority of surveyors in this research also consider the lack of budget, which should be allocated for scientific research by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

Another cause for difficult state in Kosovo, in relation to scientific research, by many surveyed in this study is considered to be the *lack of the political will*, implementing policies and strategies for this thematic.

Another factor, causing such a difficult state in some research fields in Kosovo, seems to be the *lack of necessary technical infrastructure* required for proper completion of research work.

On the other hand, the lack of awareness in correlating the research work and teaching in majority of private holders of higher education is also considered as another reason.

Another essential factor, which influences the grave state of research in Kosovo, is the lack of international cooperation.

5. Conclusions

Scientific activities of Kosovo students represent a challenge for the present only, but also for the future. Having in mind the general scientific and social context in our country recently and earlier, it could be said that student contribution in research activities continues to be under the appropriate level.

Since problem with student inclusion in scientific research is a consequence of a great number of factors, like the ones mentioned above: insufficient investments, lack of political will, lack of international cooperation. Study of literature shows that there are many other obstacles, which although well known until now, were still not resolved and continue to be treated further, such as: lack of scientific research tradition, inability to access international academic journals and other relevant sources, lack of skills to apply for international projects/donations, limited international cooperation in the field of research.

Survey shows that there is interest with students of various fields to integrate in the research field, however closer cooperation between teachers and other relevant institutions is required to encourage and improve the current state.

The difficulties through which our education went through, in relation to quality standards and transformation of the contemporary system are evident, therefore scientific development remains to be one of the problematic and priorities for higher education actions, however improvement is based on efforts provided to increase productivity between scientific research and teaching process.

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