

ENTERING THE LABOUR MARKET: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS IN POLAND AND GEORGIA

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Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to observe and describe undergraduates entering the labour market in Poland and in Georgia and fill the gaps in the literature.

Design/methodology/approach: The study uses a structured and self-administered online questionnaire. The population of the Bydgoszcz University of Science and Technology, in Poland was 900 active students, and the students of the Tbilisi State University – 4460. Cramér's V was used to check the association between different variables. The questionnaire is in line with the International Labour Organization and the National Statistics Office of Georgia methodology.

Findings: The study shows us that the results of two different countries are not as far apart as it would have to be supposed, but Georgian and Polish education system differ toward connection to the labour market.

Research limitations/implications: The study uses a short period to collect the data and a small sample. Another limitation of the study is the non-coincidence of the Education System in Poland and Georgia. Moreover, the limitation that may arise is the use of Email surveys that have several limitations, primarily being that they can appear dry and uninteresting.

Practical implications: The study can be used by regulators, researchers, scientists, public institutions, and Governments.

Originality/value: This is one of the first attempts to analyse data from Poland and Georgia and focuses on undergraduates. The article aims to determine whether there is an association between specific variables. The authors believe that this paper will gain some attention from policymakers and can allow Governments to take action.

Keywords: labour market, employment, students, Poland, Georgia.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Combining studies with employment is a dilemma that has existed for a while. However, there hasn't been a consensus on whether the problem should be approached as a contemporary phenomenon that needs to be reported or a challenge that must be resolved until now. Universities measure their success based on student attendance, persistence, and graduation rather than what students learn (Janio et al., 2022). Examining students' perspectives on the matter would be important to provide a full response to this topic. In the discussion over higher education in Poland, student employment has been disregarded. Graduate employability is the main topic of discussion when it comes to the connection between a university degree and the labour market (Zajac, 2020). People combining tertiary education with lucrative work are becoming more prevalent in Poland. According to a Polish survey, full-time students' primary motivation for taking on employment was to earn money (Ostoj, 2016).

The factors influencing students' decisions to work while they are at the University have not received much attention in the literature, and differentiating between academic fields has received even less attention (Lessky, Unger, 2022). If their studies do not last more than a specific amount of time, EU citizens are exempt from paying tuition fees at public colleges. Domestic students who can show that they have supported themselves for at least four years through a gainful job or whose parents' income is insufficient to support them may be eligible for a study stipend (Lessky, Unger, 2022). Poland's labour market has seen a significant transformation. Therefore, students accept the job that is offered to them in the hopes that the professional experience they have gained will help them find work that is appropriate for their field of study (Lenart, 2014). As a result of the research carried out by the Centre for Social Sciences, it was found that for 15% of the participants of the research, obtaining a higher education was the main motivation (without particular interest), 14% considered the advice of family members, and according to 13%, the chosen bachelor program would provide a better opportunity (Amashukeli, Lezhava, Chitashvili, 2022). As we can see from the 2013 report, while deciding about receiving higher education in Georgia, three factors are mainly considered: the prestige of the institution, the prestige of the speciality and personal inclination/interest. It is interesting that less than 5% of candidates for admission to higher education consider employment chances as an important factor (Andguladze, Bregvadze, Apkhazava, 2013). In Georgia labour market has less regular influence on the education market due to the small number of working places for graduates (Durglishvili, 2017). The main problem in Georgia associated with higher education is the high unemployment rate among university students and graduates (Narmania, et al., 2022). The study found that, depending on their subject of study, 5th-year students' personal employment income varied greatly in Poland. Students started working in their final year of studies around a dozen years ago (Jarecki, 2010). In Poland, visiting the nearest recruitment office after graduation is insufficient to secure

an intriguing job offer. According to the survey, job offers for economics and management graduates are rarely offered to people who are interested through employment offices. Apprenticeships, internships, and part-time work are excellent recruitment and candidate selection tools (Jakubiak, 2012). Such a society would be made possible by a strong educational system designed to guarantee that everyone has an honest chance to reach their potential and continuously advance their knowledge and abilities throughout their lives (Charekishvili, 2015).

Because the education system is constantly evolving, and data is becoming outdated, new research is needed. The article aims to determine whether there is an association between specific variables when it comes to the employment of students with active status. Therefore, the article fills the gap in the literature in this direction.

The analysis was restricted to the active status students at Polish and Georgian universities, and the survey was based on literature and data collected through the author's survey. These countries differ in size, per capita income levels, tuition fees, and culture, but we are able to compare student employment and correlate specific variables. Empirical research was carried out at the Faculty of Management at the Bydgoszcz University of Science and Technology in Poland and at the Faculty of Economics and Business at the Tbilisi State University, Georgia. The article is divided into four sections. The first part provides a review of the literature on the reasons for and effects of combining education with employment, as well as questions and concerns that might justify a slightly different research focus from previous studies. The second part describes higher education in Poland and in Georgia. The third part discusses the survey and the gathered data, and the fourth and final part provides the research methodology, calculations, and results. The examination of the study's findings and conclusions comes to a finish in the article.

2. Literature review

This section of the article briefly summarizes the most recent research on balancing work and university, emphasizing the phenomenon's growing prevalence, the reasons why students choose to find employment, and the good and negative repercussions of those decisions.

Higher education in Poland

In Poland, all institutions of higher learning operate under the law that came into effect on July 20, 2018; – Law on Higher Education and Science (Dz.U. poz. 1668) and it states that academic programs at universities are based on curricula, documents outlining course, programme, and institutional levels with specific outcomes (Janio et al., 2022). Higher education in Poland is organized under the Bologna process (Ostoj, 2019).

Two education profiles can be distinguished in Poland – general academic and practical profile; therefore Polish education is divided into academic and vocational universities (Art. 67, ust. 4 Ustawy z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r. Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce, poz. 1668).

As of 31st of December 2021, over 1,218.2 thousand students were educated at universities in Poland, by 2.9 thousand more compared to the previous year. In the academic year 2020/21, 297.4 thousand students received a diploma of graduation, by 3.9 thousand more than in the academic year 2019/20. Based on the POL-on register, 362 universities operated in Poland in the 2021/22 academic year (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2022).

In the last decade in Poland, along with the growing demand for higher education, the process of educating students from countries across the eastern border deepened at universities (Thieme, 2009). The change of temporary place of residence in connection with taking up studies also concerned Polish youth who left for other European Union countries.

Against the backdrop of the intensification of migration processes in higher education, there are many changes in the sphere of the education process itself, e.g. distance learning methods and techniques, universities open branches, off-campus departments in other voivodeships and abroad, double diploma programs are implemented.

There are also non-public universities that live solely on student tuition fees, they are profit-oriented, and most of them operate as a company (Mazur, 2020).

The emergence of numerous public and private universities has created considerable competition in the field of higher education. Most universities have lowered their eligibility requirements and tuition fees to make them more attractive and accessible to new students. The lowering of the requirements has particularly weakened the ability to differentiate the social degree and ceased to be something exceptional. The large supply of students with academic titles has lowered the quality of the titles issued and the attractiveness of students according to employers as potential candidates on the labour market, and graduation from a university is not as prestigious as it used to be (Almog, J., Almog, O., 2020).

Higher education in Georgia

In Georgia, for almost the last twenty years, the main pillar of the reforms carried out in the higher education system were the changes implemented by the "Bologna process", regardless of whether it actually reflected the main ideas and spirit of the Bologna process. A separate issue for research and discussion within the Bologna process is what a student should know after graduating from a higher education institution to be able to adapt to a rapidly changing environment, professional growth, mobility/transfer in different fields and establishment in a new profession (Amashukeli, Lezhava, Chitashvili, 2022). Like in Poland, students in Georgia can receive education in both state and private universities. The amount of tuition fees in state universities has not changed for more than a decade, despite sharp inflation. Although studying in Poland is free, in Georgia, even without a grant, the amount of fees is not expensive compared to other training courses. In Georgia, the national grant program operates in the higher education

system, both in private and state higher education institutions. According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat), there are 64 higher educational institutions in Georgia for the 2021-2022 academic year. In Georgia, the number of students in the population aged 17-23 for the 2021/2022 academic year is 43.1 percent. However, when it comes to private universities, due to the diversity of their programs, tuition fees are much higher than public universities. Accordingly, the number of students also varies between universities. State universities attract more students due to the relatively low cost of tuition. This is confirmed by statistical data. According to Geostat, for the 2021/2022 school year 63.6 percent of student study in public, and 36.4 percent study in private universities. Social sciences, business and law programs lead the way in the admission of students in Georgia, which amounted to 45.4 percent of the total number of students admitted in all institutions.

The weakness of higher education in Georgia is that it is built on social factors instead of the labour market. The education system is directly related to the election cycle, and we see this not only at the secondary but also at the higher education level. The changes are absolutely politicized, tied to the election cycle. The strategy of education and science is tied to specific individuals, and when ministers change, there are fluctuations, and trust in the system is shaken (Amashukeli, Lezhava, Chitashvili, 2022). Social pressure on the education system is very high in Georgia. Taking drastic decisions that will worsen the condition of middle- and lower-class students by increasing fees, is not done for political reasons. Given that the output from higher education institutions is much higher than the number of jobs by programs, it makes a logical assumption that the number of public university graduates should be reduced and adjusted to the demands of the labour market. Given that political and social pressures are high, it is difficult for the state to decide to reduce student enrolment. Thus, to the small number of working places for graduates, labour market in Georgia has less regular influence on the education market (Durglishvili, 2017).

Empirical studies of researchers

In a study conducted in 2017 at the Faculty of Economics and Sociology of the University of Łódź, over 61% of non-employed students and 39% of employed students. The studies found a significantly higher average level of fatigue among non-working students, as well as lower satisfaction with studies and lecturers than among working students (Kutyło, Łaska-Formejster, Ober-Domagalska, 2019).

Research conducted in 2018 on a group of 100 students of the Białystok University of Technology showed that when choosing a job, they expect high earnings, opportunities for personal development and great promotion/career opportunities. The least valued among the respondents in terms of choosing a job were: good commuting, good atmosphere at work, flexible working hours, stability, and security of employment (Nikonowicz, Panasewicz, Połocka, 2019).

Also, research conducted at the University of Rzeszów has shown that apart from earning money, which was previously the main motive for taking up work by students, now the most important is the motive of gaining work experience facilitating employment after graduation. Already in the research carried out as part of the "Eurostudent Project" in 2008-2011, it indicated that students in Europe spend more time earning money than studying. Polish students found themselves at the forefront of Europe in this respect. Reconciliation of work and studies often takes place at the expense of studies, which is indicated by numerous absences from classes, the use of individual organization of classes during studies, poor preparation and passivity during classes, low grades in colloquiums and exams, resignation from working in student clubs scientific etc. (Lenart, 2014).

Research on consumer and economic attitudes conducted in 2015 among approximately 1,600 students of various faculties in the Visegrad Group countries – in Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, showed that a large proportion of students work independently or with more or less family help. There were 61% of such students in Poland, 81% in the Czech Republic, 56% in Slovakia, and 78% in Hungary, which indicates a high level of economic awareness of the studied group. Taking up work during studies is becoming an increasingly popular practice, and it results from the desire to gain at least partial financial independence, the need to gain professional experience, the willingness to save funds to start an independent existence after graduation (Žak, 2020).

On the other hand, research conducted on a group of 540 students from the Wielkopolska region revealed that their readiness to start a business is limited by insufficient knowledge in the field of running their own business. The main factor stimulating the decision-making about own business activity is the desire to obtain high income. The possibility of self-employment and the impact on the organization of time and lifestyle are also important stimulants for making decisions about starting a business (Gano, Łuczka, 2020). Building human capital and employability were motivations that significantly contributed to the alignment of work with the field of study. The ability to acquire skills and competencies valued in the labour market (Ostoj, 2019).

These findings support the need for more in-depth investigation into why students choose to work while still in university as well as the outcomes of such choices.

Research hypotheses

We introduced hypotheses in order to show how the field of education is associatively connected with the labour market in Georgia and Poland. After reviewing the literature, we formulated the hypotheses surrounding the study as follows:

- H1.** Activity field relation to education and working hours between countries is not different.
- H2.** Activity field relation to education and remuneration between countries is not different.
- H3.** Hours worked toward remuneration between countries is not different.

3. Survey and Research Data

Our target audience was students with an active status. Data were collected using an online questionnaire that is in line with the International Labour Organization and the National Statistical Office methodology. The questionnaire was modified, compiled in Google forms, and provided in two languages: Georgian and Polish. An online questionnaire was sent via e-mail to 900 active students of the Faculty of Management of the Bydgoszcz University of Science and Technology. The questionnaire was open for the next 2 weeks from June 24, 2022. As a result, we received 318 fully completed online questionnaires. Accordingly, the response rate was 35.3 percent, which can be considered as good because online surveys typically have a low response rate (Malhotra, Nunan, and Birks, 2017). The same questionnaire, in the Georgian language, was sent to 4460 active students at the Faculty of Economics and Business at Tbilisi State University by e-mail. The questionnaire was active for 2 weeks from July 1, 2022. In this case, we received 538 fully completed questionnaires, which gave us a response rate of 12.1 percent, which is a typical rate for an online questionnaire. We preferred to send a questionnaire to the entire population than to make a sample, since response rate is the major problem, and this fact ensured us a considerable number of responses.

For the purposes of our study, students with an active status were interviewed and asked if they had done any work for even one hour in the past 12 months. They were asked questions about whether they were employed for wages, whether they had their own business or business, or whether they systematically participated in family farming to produce agricultural products. In case of a positive answer to one of the questions, we would consider this person as employed. Data by country are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.

Data characteristics

Data	Poland	Georgia
research frame	900 active students	4460 active students
method	online (email)	online (email)
response rate	35.3%	12.1%
period	June-July, 2022	June-July, 2022
significance, α	0.05	0.05

Source: own study.

Figure 1 shows the responses of the respondents to the Polish and Georgian students of activity to field relation and working hours.

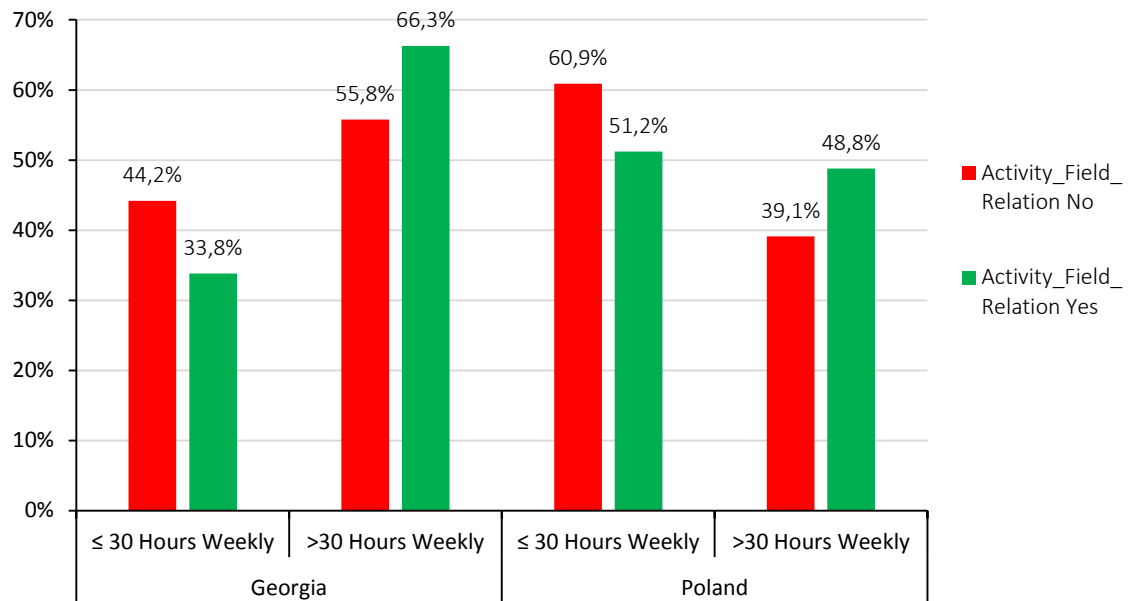


Figure 1. Activity to field relation and working hours between countries.

Source: own study.

To compare the relationship of weekly hours worked and main activity connection with the field of education in Poland and Georgia, we linked the two variables based on the hypothesis (Figure 2).

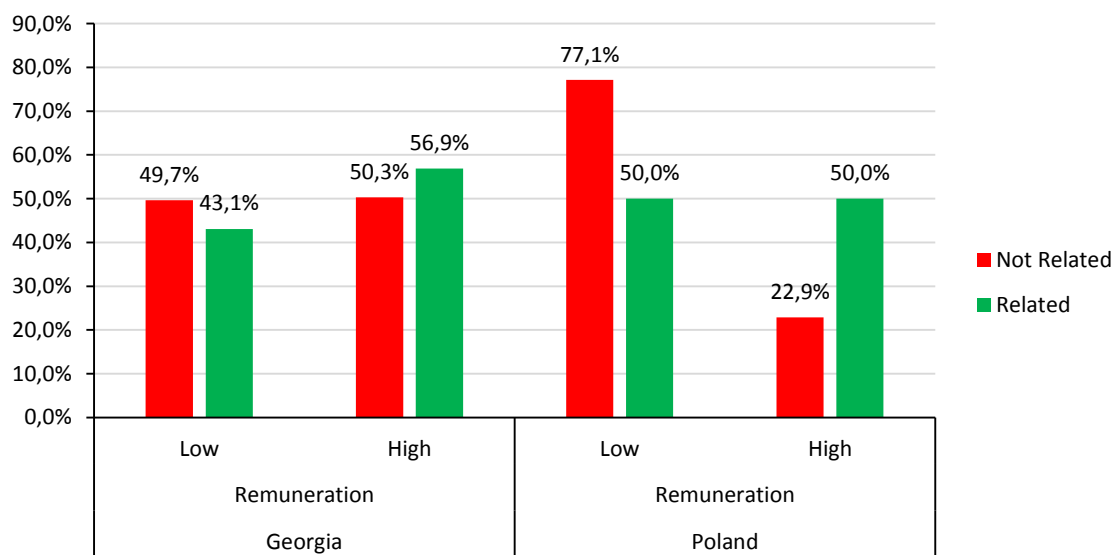


Figure 2. Remuneration and connection of main activity to field of education.

Source: own study.

According to our research, to test the hypothesis, we grouped the salaries by country and divided them into two parts. Within the country, the wages of the lowest categories were marked as low remuneration and accordingly, high categories as high remuneration.

The Figure 2 shows that where the field of work was not related to education, in the case of Georgia, the share of low-paid jobs is equal to the share of high-paid jobs. In the case of Poland, where the work field is not related to education, the share of low-paid jobs is 77.1%. This allows us to assume that in Poland the activities that are not related to education are low-paid to a greater extent. Whereas, in Georgia, where employment is not related to education, is equally paid. From these graphs, we can conclude that activities that are not related to education mean a low salary category, while the trend in Georgia is not like that.

The Figure 3 shows that where the working hours are longer, in the case of Poland 79.3% of employed students have a high wage, and 20.7% have a low wage. While in the same case, in Georgia, 66% have a high wage, and 34% have a low wage.

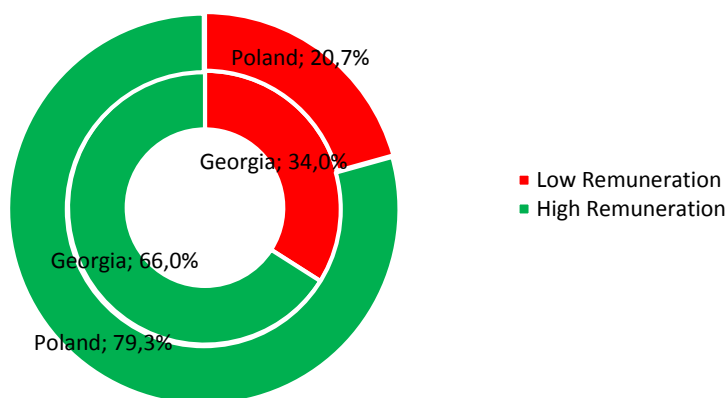


Figure 3. Worked >30 Hours and remuneration.

Source: own study.

This shows that while working hours are more than 30 students with relatively lower wage is more common in Georgia than in Poland, in other words students who work many hours in Georgia are relatively less highly paid, compared to Poland.

Among the people who work more than 30 hours, low-paid category is 20.7% in the case of Poland and 34.0% in Georgia (Figure 4). In other words, the share of low-wage employees in the category who work long hours is higher in Georgia compared to Poland. If we judge the connection between the education system and the labour market, it follows that those students who work more hours, have lower alternative cost in Georgia than in Poland.

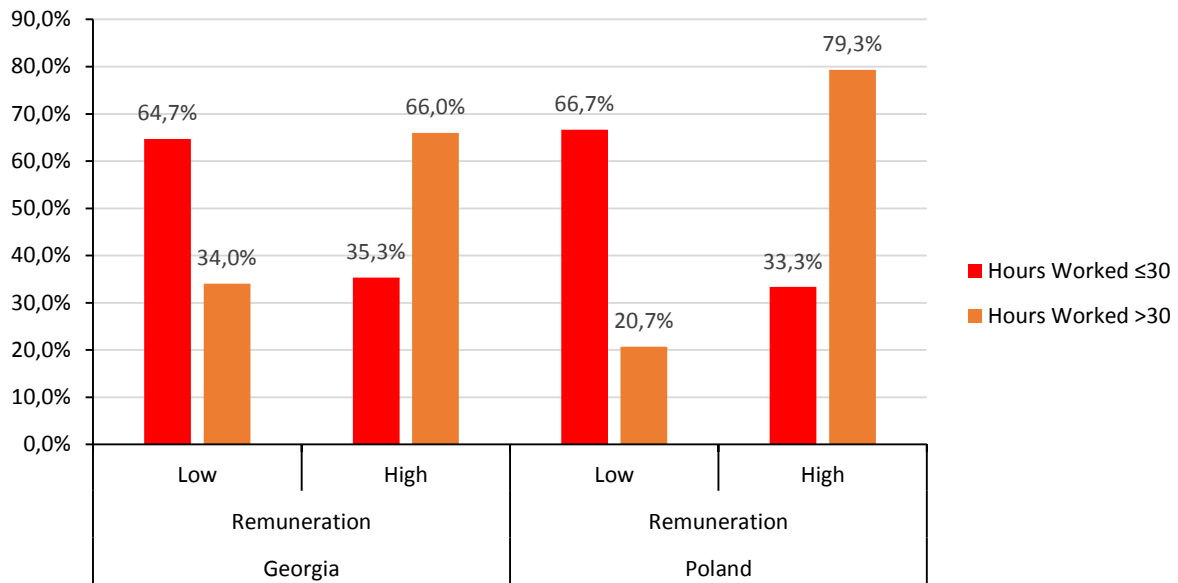


Figure 4. Hours Worked and Remuneration Between Countries.

Source: own study.

We can assume that long-term work in the case of Georgia is not so productive in terms of pay than in Poland. The solution could be to provide students with the necessary resources, in the case of Georgia, so that they do not have to work for a long time. A second solution could be to have the optimal number of students accepted by higher education institutions because students who are unable to study with long hours of work have time to choose between studying and working.

4. Methodology and Results

The assumption of our study was that whether or not students work in their profession does not affect the number of hours they work between countries. It was also assumed that whether students work in their profession or not does not impact their wages between countries. The assumption was further made that whether working time was longer or shorter did not influence remuneration between countries. Whether these three assumptions are valid or not, we will analyse how the education system is related to the labour market in Georgia and Poland.

Then the data was analysed according to both countries. There is insufficient statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis at the 5% level of significance based on the H test statistic. Cramér's V coefficient to determine the association between variables was used (1).

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2 / n}{\min(r - 1), (c - 1)}} \quad (1)$$

where:

n – total sample size,

r – number of rows,

c – number of columns.

The adjustment is such that V will range from 0 to 1. A large value of V merely indicates a high degree of association. It does not indicate how the variables are associated (Malhotra, Nunan, Birks, 2017). The calculations are presented and summarized in the Table 2.

Table 2.

The results of the analysis of the association between the variables

	Georgia	Poland	Georgia	Poland	Georgia	Poland
Hypothesis	Null hypothesis	Null hypothesis	Cramér's V	Cramér's V	Sig.	Sig.
H1	Rejected	Accepted	0.106	0.093	0.036	0.45
H2	Accepted	Rejected	0.065	0.283	0.200	0.023
H3	Rejected	Rejected	0.299	0.458	0.000	0.000

Source: own study.

H1 hypothesis was rejected in Georgian case and accepted in Poland case. This means that working hours and activity field in relation to education is significant in Georgia and not in Poland. In the case of Georgia, the relationship between education and work has a significant effect on hours worked, while in Poland this relationship is weak. From the labour market's perspective, this means that Georgia has a positive trend compared to Poland in terms of hours worked because there is a direct relationship between hours worked and educational activities in connection to work (Cramer's V = 0.106 in Georgian case compared to Poland – 0.093).

H2 Hypothesis was confirmed for Georgia, but not for Poland case. This means that for Georgia there is no connection between activity field in relation to education and remuneration, while for Poland it is associatively connected. (Cramer's V = 0.065 for Georgia and 0.283 for Poland). This trend shows that in terms of remuneration, the education system is more closely related to the labour market in Poland than in Georgia.

H3 Weak association was found also between hours worked and remuneration. In the case of both countries, the hypothesis was rejected, which means that hours worked and wages differ. However, in the case of Poland, the connection is stronger (Cramer's V = 0.458), which means that long-term workers are paid relatively more than in Georgia (Cramer's V = 0.299).

5. Conclusions

The purpose of our article was to show how Georgian and Polish education system differ toward connection to the labour market.

In recent two-decade major reforms carried out in the higher education system in Georgia, but the factors causing these changes should be looked for more in political decisions rather than changes in the labour market. In Georgia social pressure stays high in the public education system, thus labour market in Georgia has less regular influence on the education market.

Poland has growing demand for higher education, but as well as in Georgia the large supply of students with academic titles has lowered the quality and the attractiveness according to employers.

In Poland, most universities have lowered their eligibility requirements and tuition fees to make them more attractive and accessible to new students. General price increases in Georgia, while university fees have not been raised in two decades, have had the same effect.

Leaving aside the socio-political content, the attitude of the labour market to the education system was evaluated by us. For this, we show the main results and introduce 3 hypotheses.

From our survey hypotheses showed that working hours and activity field relation to education is significant in Georgia and not in Poland. The second hypothesis was confirmed for Georgia, but not for Poland. This means that for Georgia there is no connection between activity field in relation to education and remuneration, while for Poland it is associatively connected. Third hypothesis was rejected, which means that connection between hours worked, and wages are statistically important in both countries.

It is necessary to deepen the relationship between universities and the labour market and introduce platforms that will be more convenient for building modern skills for modern challenges. A university should not be a monolithic organization but should vary based on general market principles. All this allows it to maintain and develop an attitude in society. University is the main factor in providing qualified personnel concerning the labour market. The monolithic system may survive for some time, but due to the rapid pace of modern development, it may lead to a revolution within the university as an institution. Otherwise, university education may become a time-consuming system.

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