



"Enhancing Entrepreneurial Education in Emerging Economies: A Needs Analysis at Eqrem Çabej University"

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ABSTRACT

This study undertakes a comprehensive needs analysis to explore the state of entrepreneurial education at "Eqrem Çabej" University, a pivotal institution in Gjirokastra, Albania. Drawing on responses from teaching staff, students, and local businesses, the research aims to identify existing gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the integration of entrepreneurial education within higher education curricula. Through a mixed-methods approach combining questionnaires and interviews, the study captures diverse perspectives on the entrepreneurial mindset, educational practices, and the perceived needs for enhancing entrepreneurship education. Key findings reveal a significant need for strategic policy development, enhanced infrastructure, and tailored educational programs to foster entrepreneurial skills among students. The study contributes to the discourse on entrepreneurship education by highlighting the critical role of higher education institutions in bridging the gap between academic preparation and the demands of the modern business environment. The implications of this research extend beyond "Eqrem Çabej" University, offering valuable insights for universities seeking to cultivate entrepreneurial competencies in their students.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Education; Needs Analysis; Higher Education; Emerging Economies; Industry-Academia Collaboration

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The rapidly changing global economy demands innovative and adaptable individuals capable of navigating complex market dynamics and contributing to economic growth through entrepreneurial ventures. Entrepreneurial education in higher education institutions is pivotal in preparing students to meet these demands by developing their entrepreneurial mindsets, skills, and intentions. Scholarly literature consistently emphasizes the transformative potential of entrepreneurial education in fostering innovation, job creation, and economic development (Fayolle, 2013; Kuratko, 2005). Despite its recognized importance, the integration of entrepreneurship into higher education curricula faces numerous challenges, including curriculum design, faculty expertise, and alignment with industry needs.

1.2 Context

"Eqrem Çabej" University of Gjirokastra, established in 1991, stands as a prominent educational, scientific, and cultural institution in Southern Albania. With a diverse range of study programs and a significant number of students, it is strategically positioned to influence the region's socio-economic development through education. However, like many institutions worldwide, it grapples with effectively embedding entrepreneurial education within its programs to equip students with the necessary skills for the entrepreneurial world.

1.3 Research Gap

While there is substantial research on the general benefits and challenges of entrepreneurial education, there is a notable gap in literature addressing specific institutional contexts, particularly in emerging economies like

Albania. This study addresses this gap by conducting a needs analysis at "Eqrem Çabej" University to understand the current state, challenges, and opportunities of entrepreneurial education from the perspectives of faculty, students, and the local business community.

1.4 Purpose and Research Questions

This research aims to assess the needs for enhancing entrepreneurial education at "Eqrem Çabej" University and to propose actionable recommendations based on the findings. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. *What are the current practices and challenges in implementing entrepreneurial education at "Eqrem Çabej" University?*
2. *What are the perceived needs of teaching staff, students, and local businesses regarding entrepreneurial education?*
3. *How can "Eqrem Çabej" University enhance its entrepreneurial education offerings to better meet the needs of its stakeholders and contribute to regional economic development?*

By addressing these questions, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights into the enhancement of entrepreneurial education at "Eqrem Çabej" University and similar institutions, with broader implications for the role of higher education in fostering entrepreneurship.

2. Literature Review

The significance of entrepreneurial education within higher education contexts has been widely recognized for its potential to equip students with the critical skills needed to thrive in a dynamic global economy. This literature review synthesizes existing research on entrepreneurial education, explores challenges and best practices, and positions the current study within the broader academic discourse.

2.1 Significance of Entrepreneurial Education

Entrepreneurial education is pivotal in cultivating the entrepreneurial intentions, innovativeness, and proactive behavior required in today's labor market (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015; Pittaway & Cope, 2007). It goes beyond merely teaching students to start businesses; it fosters a mindset that embraces innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Jones & Iredale, 2010). Studies have shown that well-structured entrepreneurial programs can significantly enhance students' entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions (Liñán, Rodríguez-Cohard, & Rueda-Cantuche, 2011).

2.2 Challenges in Entrepreneurial Education

Despite its benefits, embedding entrepreneurial education in higher education institutions faces several challenges. These include integrating entrepreneurship effectively across diverse disciplines, ensuring the relevance of content to the local and global economic context, and addressing the gap between academic knowledge and practical entrepreneurial skills (Nabi et al., 2017; Neck & Greene, 2011). Faculty readiness and institutional support are also critical factors that influence the success of these programs (Kuratko, 2005).

2.3 Best Practices in Entrepreneurial Education

Best practices in entrepreneurial education often involve experiential learning, industry partnerships, and interdisciplinary approaches. Experiential learning through case studies, business plan competitions, and real-world projects is particularly effective in enhancing students' entrepreneurial skills (Bell, 2015; Jones, 2013). Collaboration with industry partners can also provide practical insights and networking opportunities for students, making education more relevant and impactful (Fayolle, 2013).

2.4 Need Analyses in Entrepreneurial Education

Need analyses in entrepreneurial education are crucial for understanding the specific requirements of students, faculty, and the business community. These analyses help in tailoring educational offerings to better meet stakeholder needs and enhance the efficacy of entrepreneurial programs (Rasmussen & Sørheim, 2006). However, there is a scarcity of research focusing on need analyses within specific institutional or regional contexts, especially in emerging economies where the entrepreneurial ecosystem may differ significantly from those in developed countries.

2.5 Positioning of the Current Study

This study contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive need analysis of entrepreneurial education at "Eqrem Çabej" University, situated in an emerging economy. It extends existing knowledge by exploring the specific challenges and opportunities within this unique context, offering insights into the perceived needs of faculty, students, and local businesses. By focusing on a less studied geographical and institutional context, the study challenges the one-size-fits-all approach to entrepreneurial education and underscores the importance of localized strategies. Furthermore, it adds to the body of knowledge on best practices by proposing actionable recommendations tailored to the specificities of "Eqrem Çabej" University and similar institutions in similar socio-economic contexts.

4. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to conduct a comprehensive need analysis of entrepreneurial education at "Eqrem Çabej" University. This approach was chosen to capture the complexity of educational needs from multiple stakeholders' perspectives, allowing for both quantitative analysis of broad patterns and qualitative insights into specific challenges and opportunities.

4.1 Research Design

The research design integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure a holistic understanding of the entrepreneurial education landscape at "Eqrem Çabej" University. This mixed-methods approach facilitates the triangulation of data, enhancing the reliability and validity of the research findings. A need analysis was specifically selected to identify gaps between current educational offerings and the actual needs of students, faculty, and local businesses, thereby informing targeted improvements.

4.2 Participants

The participants in this study include a diverse range of stakeholders from "Eqrem Çabej" University and the local business community:

- **Teachers and Researchers:** Participants were selected based on their involvement in delivering entrepreneurship education or related subjects. A total of 120 teachers and researchers participated, ensuring a wide representation of academic disciplines.
- **Students:** 130 students from various faculties participated, including both undergraduate and graduate levels, selected to represent a broad spectrum of disciplines and academic interests.
- **Businesses:** 80 local businesses participated, selected to cover a range of industries and sizes to understand the community's needs and perspectives on university graduates' entrepreneurial skills. Selection criteria for all participant groups included willingness to participate, relevance to the theme of entrepreneurial education, and diversity in terms of demographics and professional backgrounds.

4.3 Data Collection

Data was collected through two primary methods:

- **Questionnaires:** Distributed to teachers, students, and businesses, the questionnaires were designed to capture quantitative data on participants' perceptions, experiences, and needs related to entrepreneurial education. The questionnaires included both closed and open-ended questions to allow for statistical analysis and qualitative insights.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of participants from each group to gather in-depth qualitative data. The interviews aimed to explore complex issues and personal experiences not fully captured by the questionnaires.

Both the questionnaires and interview guides were developed based on a review of relevant literature and pilot tested with a small group of stakeholders to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability. Adjustments were made based on feedback from the pilot study.

4.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using statistical software to identify patterns and correlations in the responses. Descriptive statistics provided an overview of the data, while inferential statistics were used to examine relationships between variables.

Qualitative data from the open-ended questionnaire responses and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved coding the data to identify recurrent themes and patterns related to the research questions. The analysis was conducted iteratively, with themes refined and redefined through a process of constant comparison.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the current state of entrepreneurial education at "Eqrem Çabej" University, the needs of its stakeholders, and the development of grounded recommendations for enhancing its entrepreneurial education initiatives.

5. Results

5.1 Overall Findings

The analysis of data collected from teaching staff, students, and businesses revealed significant insights into the state of entrepreneurial education at "Eqrem Çabej" University.

- **Teaching Staff:** The majority acknowledged the implementation of entrepreneurial education but highlighted challenges such as insufficient entrepreneurial experience, lack of specific materials, and inadequate infrastructure. There was a strong call for a more ambitious entrepreneurship strategy and action plan at the university level.
- **Students:** They perceived the university as somewhat supportive of entrepreneurship education. Their main concerns revolved around the risk of failure and a perceived lack of encouragement for entrepreneurial

initiatives. Students expressed a desire for more practical training and direct involvement in entrepreneurial activities.

- **Businesses:** Local businesses were keen on closer cooperation with the university but pointed out a significant gap in communication and collaboration. They expressed a need for services such as theoretical and practical training, consulting, and new recruitment opportunities.

5.2 Findings' Themes

Several key themes emerged across the participant groups:

- **Need for Enhanced Infrastructure and Resources:** A common theme among all groups was the critical need for improved infrastructure and resources to support entrepreneurial activities.
- **Curriculum Development and Practical Training:** There was a consensus on the need for curriculum development that includes more practical, hands-on training in entrepreneurial skills.
- **Collaboration Between University and Industry:** Strengthening the collaboration between the university and local businesses was seen as vital for providing students with real-world entrepreneurial experiences.

5.3 Comparative Insights

Comparing the perspectives of different stakeholder groups revealed a shared understanding of the importance of entrepreneurial education but varied in perceptions of its implementation and effectiveness. Businesses seemed more optimistic about student capabilities than the students themselves, indicating a possible underestimation of their entrepreneurial potential by students.

6. Discussion

6.1 Interpretation of Findings

The findings suggest that while "Eqrem Çabej" University has made strides in incorporating entrepreneurial education, significant gaps remain in infrastructure, curriculum, and industry collaboration. These results align with global challenges in entrepreneurial education, emphasizing the need for practical, experience-based learning environments (Bell, 2015; Jones, 2013).

6.2 Challenges and Opportunities

The study identifies critical challenges including resource limitations, curriculum design, and external collaboration. However, these challenges also present opportunities for the university to lead in developing innovative, practical educational models that can bridge the gap between academic learning and entrepreneurial success.

6.3 Strategic Recommendations

- **Develop a Comprehensive Entrepreneurial Strategy:** An overarching strategy including curriculum development, faculty training, and resource allocation is essential.
- **Enhance Practical Learning Opportunities:** Integrate more experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, industry projects, and entrepreneurship labs.
- **Strengthen Industry Collaboration:** Establish formal partnerships with local businesses to facilitate knowledge exchange, mentorship, and practical training.

Annex I: Results of Questionnaire for teachers and researchers

Table 1

Your Institution	Responds	In %
University of Sports of Tirana	0	0%
Aleksander Moisiu University of Durës	0	0%
Aleksandër Xhuvani University of Elbasan	0	0%
Eqrem Cabej University of Gjirokastra	120	100%
Fan S. Noli Korça University	0	0%
Luigj Gurakuqi University of Shkodra	0	0%
Vlora Independence University College	0	0%
Ismail Qemali University of Vlora	0	0%
Other	0	0%

Graph 1

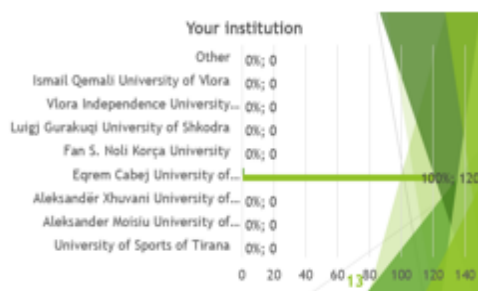


Table 2

Scientific field	Responds	In %
Natural Science	10	8%
Engineering and technology	0	0%
Medical and health sciences	0	0%
Agricultural Sciences	0	0%
Social Sciences	89	74%
Humanities	11	9%
Other sciences	10	8%

Graph 2

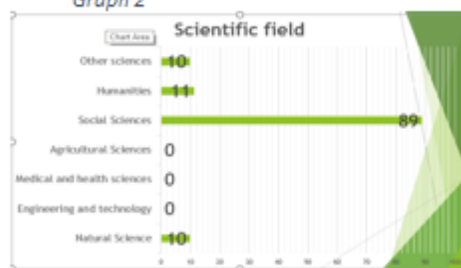


Table 3

Your position	Responds	In %
Teacher of pre-university education	61	51%
University education teacher	45	38%
Researcher	0	0%
Teacher and researcher	14	12%

Graph 3



Table 4

Your Gender	Responds	In %
Female	106	88%
Male	14	12%

Graph 4



Table 5

Your teaching / research experience *	Responders	In %
0 - 5 vjet	27	32%
5 - 10 vjet	23	27%
10 - 20 vjet	22	26%
Më shumë se 20 vjet	13	15%

Graph 5



Table 6

<i>My university well supports entrepreneurship education and related activities.</i>	<i>Responds</i>	<i>In %</i>
1	20	17%
2	16	13%
3	28	23%
4	3	2%
5	7	6%
6	4	4%
7	10	8%
8	13	11%
9	20	16%
10	0	0%

Graph 6

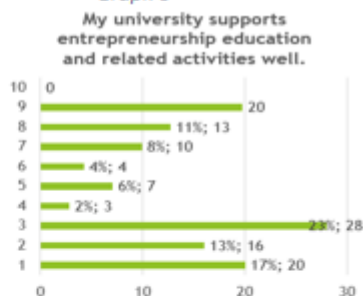


Table 7

<i>Please rate yourself 1-10 for "seeing opportunities":</i>	<i>Responds</i>	<i>In %</i>
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	0	0%
5	3	2%
6	7	6%
7	11	9%
8	42	35%
9	34	28%
10	23	19%

Graph 7

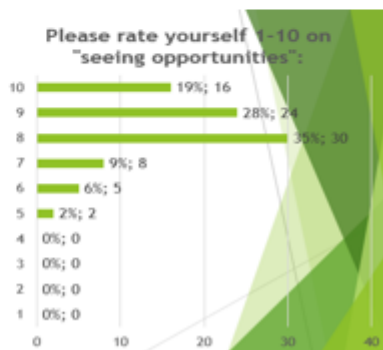


Table 8

<i>My university well supports entrepreneurship education and related activities.</i>	<i>Responds</i>	<i>In %</i>
1	20	17%
2	16	13%
3	28	23%
4	3	2%
5	7	6%
6	4	4%
7	10	8%
8	13	11%
9	20	16%
10	0	0%

Graph 8

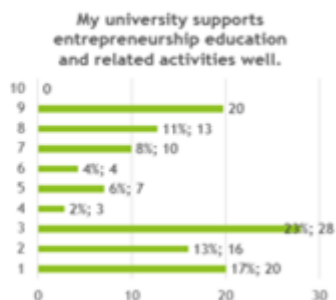


Table 9

<i>Please rate yourself 1-10 for "seeing opportunities":</i>	<i>Responds</i>	<i>In %</i>
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	0	0%
5	3	2%
6	7	6%
7	11	9%
8	42	35%
9	34	28%
10	23	19%

Graph 9

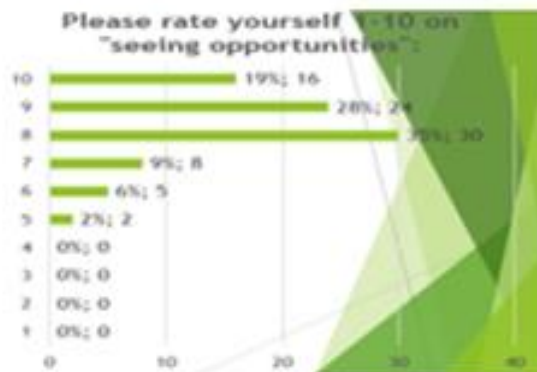


Table 10

Please rate yourself from 1-10 to "understanding options and evaluating different options"	Responds	In %
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	0	0%
5	0	0%
6	7	8%
7	8	9%
8	29	34%
9	22	26%
10	19	22%

Graph 10



Table 11

How involved are you in entrepreneurial activities with your colleagues?	Responds	In %
1	10	8%
2	19	16%
3	16	13%
4	20	17%
5	15	13%
6	7	6%
7	14	12%
8	5	4%
9	8	7%
10	6	5%

Graph 11

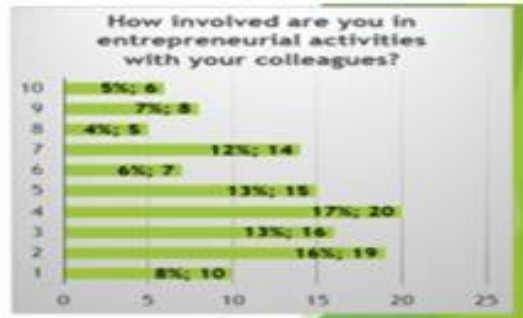


Table 12

How involved are you in entrepreneurial activities with your students?	Responds	In %
1	2	2%
2	1	1%
3	0	0%
4	5	6%
5	3	4%
6	4	5%
7	15	18%
8	10	12%
9	18	21%
10	27	32%

Graph 12

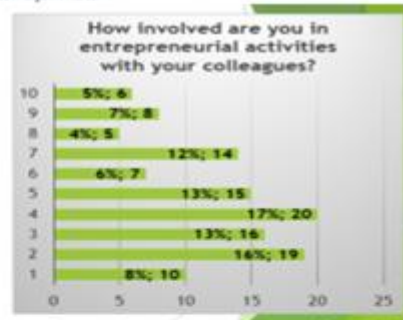


Table 13

How entrepreneurs are your students	Responds	In %
1	15	13%
2	28	23%
3	6	5%
4	14	12%
5	5	4%
6	12	10%
7	18	15%
8	12	10%
9	6	5%
10	4	3%

Graph 13

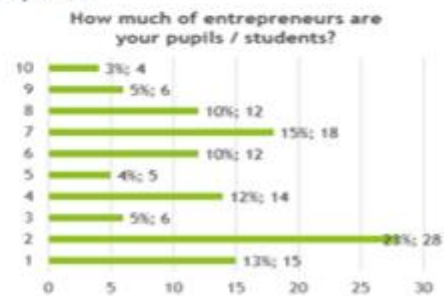


Table 14

Are you able to support your pupils / students in their career path?	Responds	In %
Po	85	71%
Jo	0	0%
Nuk mund të them gjë	35	29%

Graph 14

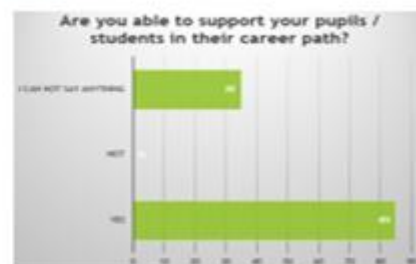


Table 15

Please rate yourself 1-10 on "taking advantage of opportunities and taking initiatives":	Responds	In %
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	0	0%
5	1	1%
6	10	12%
7	7	8%
8	20	24%
9	27	32%
10	20	24%

Graph 15

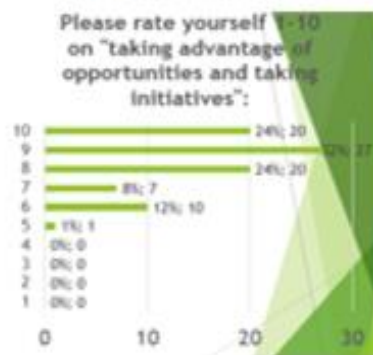


Table 16

I am interested in using entrepreneurial methodology in developing my teaching.	Responds	In %
1	0	0%
2	1	1%
3	1	1%
4	0	0%
5	0	0%
6	2	2%
7	8	9%
8	9	11%
9	21	25%
10	43	51%

Graph 16



ANEX II: Results of Questionnaire for students

Table 1

The institution where you are currently studying	Responds	In %
University of Sports of Tirana	0	0%
Aleksander Moisiu University of Durrës	0	0%
Aleksandër Xhuvani University of Elbasan	0	0%
Eqrem Cabej University of Gjirokastra	130	100%
Fan S. Noli Korça University	0	0%
Luigj Gurakuqi University of Shkoder	0	0%
Vlora Independence University College	0	0%
Ismail Qemali University of Vlora	0	0%

Graph 1

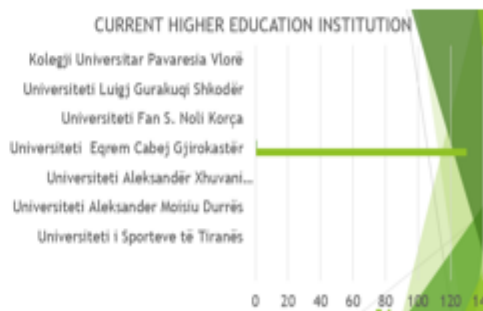


Table 2

Upcoming Graduation	Responds	In %
Bachelor	99	76%
Master	31	24%
PhD	0	0%

Graph 2

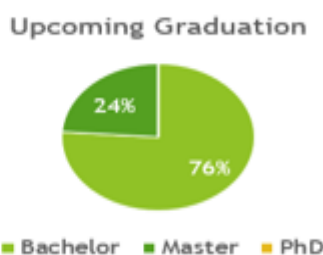


Table 3

Your Gender Responds		In %
Male	33	27%
Female	89	73%

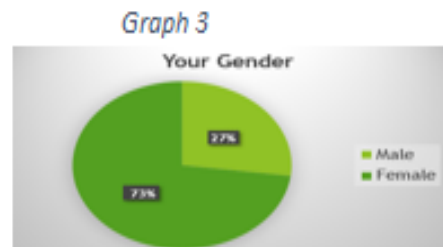


Table 4

My university supports entrepreneurship education and related activities well	Responds	In %
1	2	2%
2	0	0%
3	4	3%
4	0	0%
5	2	2%
6	4	3%
7	9	7%
8	12	10%
9	14	11%
10	75	61%

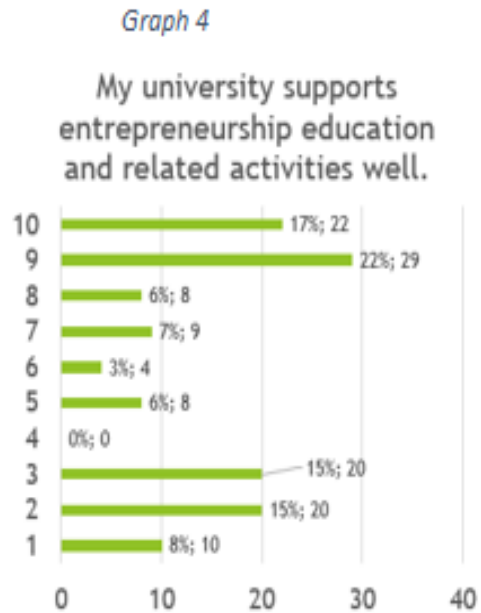


Table 5

Please rate yourself 1-10 on "Seeing options"	Responds	In %
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	1	1%
5	14	11%
6	9	7%
7	8	7%
8	38	30%
9	18	13%
10	38	31%



Table 6

Please rate yourself from 1-10 on "Understanding the possibilities and evaluating different options".		
	Responds	In %
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	4	3%
5	6	5%
6	6	5%
7	19	16%
8	21	17%
9	25	20%
10	41	34%

Graph 6

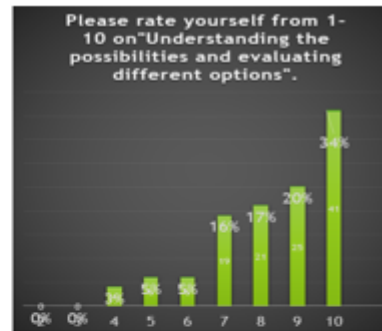


Table 7

Rank yourself 1-10 in "Taking advantage from opportunities and undertaking initiative":		
	Responds	In %
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	4	3%
5	4	3%
6	11	9%
7	20	16%
8	24	20%
9	16	13%
10	43	35%

Graph 7



Table 8

Are you thinking of starting your own business after graduation?		
	Responds	In %
Yes	62	51%
No	4	3%
I can not say	24	20%

Graph 8

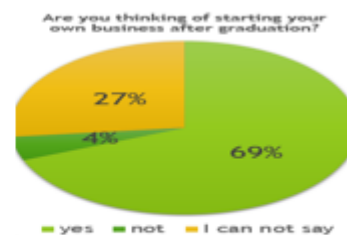


Table 9

What can motivate you to become an entrepreneur?		
	Responds	In %
Innovation	11	8%
Financial Success	16	12%
Recognition	6	4%
Indipendence	37	27%
Role	5	4%
Other	14	10%
Self Realization	33	24%

Graph 9



Table 10

Are you currently involved in entrepreneurial activities?	Responds	In %
Yes	42	34%
No	80	66%

Graph 10



Table 11

How much of entrepreneur do you consider your teachers?	Responds	In %
1	2	2%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	0	0%
5	3	2%
6	2	2%
7	14	11%
8	9	7%
9	31	25%
10	60	49%

Graph 11



Table 12

Are your teachers capable of helping you if you have a business idea you want to develop?	Responds	In %
Yes	64	52%
No	6	5%
I can not say	52	43%

Graph 12



Table 13

Have you already been in contact with entrepreneurs during your studies?	Responds	In %
Yes	44	36%
No	78	64%

Graph 13



Table 14

If not, would you like to contact entrepreneurs during your studies?	Responds	In %
Yes	91	75%
No	8	7%
I can not say	23	19%

Graph 14



ANEX III: Results of Questionnaire for businesses / business organizations (CCD) / entrepreneurs

Table 1

The industry sector where your company operates	Responds	In %
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	12	18%
Manufacturing, mining and quarrying, and other industries	0	0%
Construction	8	12%
Wholesale and retail trade activities, transport and storage, accommodation and food service	7	11%
Information and communication	8	12%
Financial and insurance activities	8	12%
Real estate activities	0	0%
Professional, scientific, technical, administration and support services activities	9	14%
Public administration, defense, education, human health and social work activities	13	20%
Other services	15	23%

Graph 1



Table 2

Is your company cooperating with the university?	Responds	In %
yes	25	31%
not	48	60%
I can not say	7	9%

Graph 2

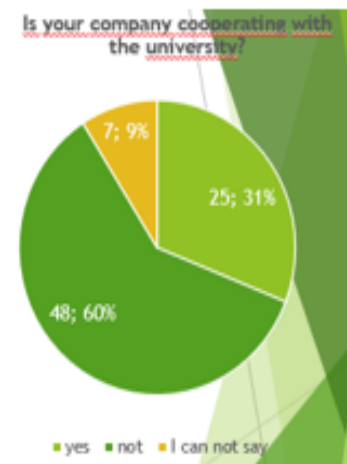


Table 3

In your opinion, university students are able to: "See the possibilities".	Responds	In %
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	3	5%
4	0	0%
5	5	8%
6	16	24%
7	6	9%
8	20	30%
9	8	12%
10	8	12%

Graph 3

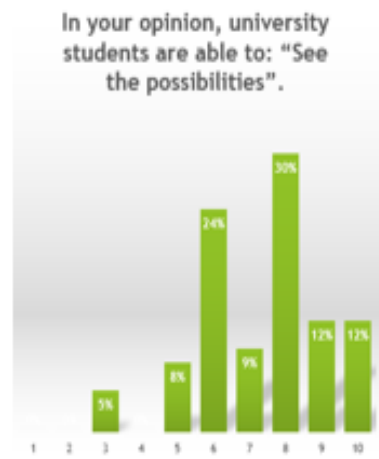


Table 4

In your opinion, university students are able to understand the possibilities and evaluate different options.	Responds	In %
1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	1	2%
5	13	20%
6	19	29%
7	12	18%
8	14	21%
9	16	24%
10	5	8%

Graph 4

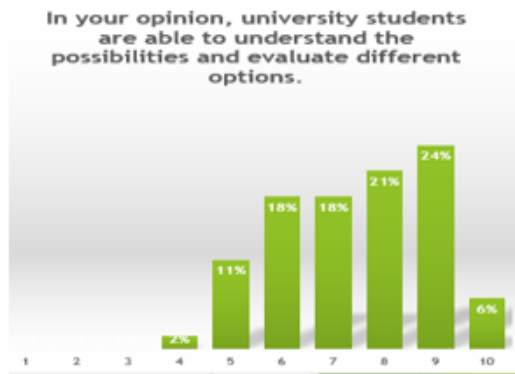
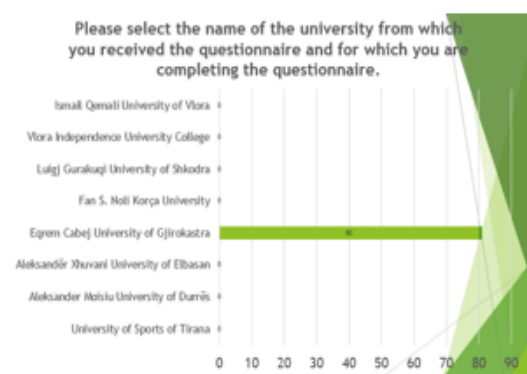


Table 5

Please select the name of the university from which you received the questionnaire and for which you are completing the questionnaire.	Responds	In %
University of Sports of Tirana	0	0%
Aleksander Moisiu University of Durrës	0	0%
Aleksandër Xhuvani University of Elbasan	0	0%
Egrem Cabej University of Gjirokastra	80	100%
Fan S. Noli Korça University	0	0%
Luigj Gurakuqi University of Shkodra	0	0%
Vlora Independence University College	0	0%
Ismail Qemali University of Vlora	0	0%

Graph 5



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