



Research Article

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Empowering migration solutions: The impact of evidence-based policymaking in Kosovo

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Abstract

This study analyzes policies on youth empowerment, employment, and migration, framed within migration and labor market theories, as well as the principles of evidence-based policy (EBP). The central hypothesis posits that the implementation of EBP in Kosovo's public administration would improve accountability, transparency, and policy delivery, thus reducing youth emigration. The research, using a qualitative approach, compares Kosovo's policies with theoretical and models. It reveals a significant educational disparity, high youth unemployment, and ineffective migration policies, contributing to persistent youth migration. Kosovo's initiatives to address youth migration have been limited by weak policy coordination, institutional inefficiencies, and lack of empirical data. Therefore, EBP could enhance policy effectiveness by providing solutions for aligning education with labor market demands, improving vocational training, and creating sustainable employment opportunities, thereby reducing youth emigration and fostering better integration of returnees.

Keywords: Evidence-Based Policy, Youth Unemployment, Migration, Kosovo, Public Administration, Labor Market, Policy Analysis.

1. Introduction

This paper explores the integration of Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) in Kosovo's migration policy to enhance effectiveness, accountability, and transparency, ultimately seeking to reduce youth emigration. Kosovo faces significant emigration challenges, with 42,728 citizens leaving in 2021 due to high unemployment and limited economic

opportunities (IOM 2022). The research aims to improve governance institutions and address migratory patterns in a post-conflict community, as reflected in Organization for Migrant Reports (2022). With 30% of the population having migrated in 2021, the demographic crisis poses a threat to future development, highlighting the need for effective, evidence-based migration policies, as emphasized by the World Bank (2015).

Youth emigration from Kosovo remains one of the country's most pressing socio-economic issues. With an alarmingly high youth unemployment rate of 38% (World Bank Group, 2019), many young people are compelled to seek better opportunities abroad. The study examines Kosovo's youth employment, education, and migration policies using Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) and current migration and labor market theories. It aims to determine if EBP implementation can significantly reduce youth emigration by fostering transparency, accountability, and effective policy delivery, addressing economic stagnation, lack of employment opportunities, and educational mismatches in the labor market.

The study of Kosovo's migration governance from 2017 to 2020 is crucial due to significant legislative changes and shifting migration patterns. The Kosovo Migration Strategy 2019-2023 was delayed with the change in administration. A new 2021-2025 plan is being developed to align with EU standards, focusing on Evidence-Based Policy, stakeholder involvement, and data-driven decisions.

This study argues that adopting Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) in Kosovo's public administration could lead to more effective, data-driven policies, helping reduce youth emigration. EBP, which relies on empirical evidence, could improve coordination between youth employment, education, and migration policies. The research will assess whether Kosovo's policies align with migration theories such as Push-Pull (Lee, 1966) and Dual Labor Market (Doeringer & Piore, 1971) to inform more effective responses.

1.1 Significance of study

This study aims to address Kosovo's high youth unemployment rate and migration by examining how EBP can be integrated into its policymaking process. It contributes to ongoing debates about governance and policy effectiveness in post-conflict societies. Kosovo's experience is similar to other Balkan countries like Albania and North Macedonia, who face similar challenges. For example, North Macedonia's reforms in education and vocational training have had some success in reducing youth unemployment, while Albania has partnered with the private sector to improve vocational training outcomes (OECD, 2020). Comparing Kosovo's strategies to these regional efforts can help identify opportunities and challenges in policy development. Understanding the similarities and differences between these countries' policy responses can provide valuable lessons for Kosovo.

1.2 Similarities and Differences Between Countries

Similarities between Kosovo and its regional neighbors, such as Albania, North

Macedonia, and Serbia, are evident in the high rates of youth unemployment and the challenges related to the mismatch between education and labor market needs. However, the responses to these issues differ significantly. For instance, North Macedonia has implemented reforms to improve its educational system, focusing on vocational and technical training, which has helped reduce youth unemployment rates, particularly in fields such as engineering and IT (OECD, 2020). In contrast, Kosovo's education system remains over-reliant on academic fields that do not align with the needs of the labor market, particularly in sectors like information technology and vocational trades.

Serbia, on the other hand, has adopted a dual education system, combining classroom learning with practical work experience. This system has resulted in a more employable workforce, as students graduate with skills that meet the demands of the private sector (OECD, 2020). Kosovo could draw valuable lessons from these countries by strengthening its own vocational education and training (VET) system, fostering closer collaboration between educational institutions and the business sector, and aligning educational outcomes with labor market needs.

1.3 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, which is particularly suited for exploring the complex relationship between migration policy, labor market needs, and education systems. Qualitative methods, such as document analysis and case studies, enable a deeper understanding of the nuances involved in policy implementation and governance. By analyzing the data presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3—relating to youth employment, educational mismatch, and migration policies—the research aims to assess the effectiveness of current policies and identify key areas for improvement.

The study also draws on a comparative approach, incorporating examples from regional countries such as North Macedonia, Albania, and Serbia. This allows for a broader perspective on how similar challenges are being addressed in neighboring states and highlights best practices that Kosovo could adopt. The methodology also integrates insights from key migration and labor market theories to inform the analysis, particularly the Push-Pull Theory (Lee, 1966) and the Dual Labor Market Theory (Doeringer & Piore, 1971).

1.4 Hypothesis

The central hypothesis of this study is:

"Implementing Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) in Kosovo's public administration will enhance accountability, transparency, and effective policy delivery, thereby reducing youth emigration."

This hypothesis assumes that EBP can improve the effectiveness of Kosovo's migration and labor market policies by making them more data-driven and better aligned with the actual needs of the youth population. Through evidence-based policymaking, Kosovo could address critical issues such as youth unemployment, the mismatch

between educational outcomes and labor market demands, and the root causes of youth emigration. The research will test this hypothesis by evaluating the alignment of Kosovo's current policies with the principles of EBP and comparing these policies with those of other regional countries.

2. Literature review

This literature review explores Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) in Kosovo's migration challenges, focusing on *theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, policy implementation challenges, analysis of selected examples, and research gaps*.

2.1 Theoretical frameworks

The Dual Labor Market Theory, proposed by Doeringer and Piore (1970) is a theoretical framework that categorizes labor markets into a primary sector with high wages and favorable working conditions and a secondary sector with low wages and poor conditions. Koser's research (2007) highlights the increasing labor demand in developed countries, further driving migration from Kosovo due to segmentation and economic opportunities in developing nations.

The Push-Pull Theory of Migration (Lee 1966) suggests that individuals leave their home countries due to economic hardship, political instability, and limited job opportunities, while they are drawn to Western Europe due to better job prospects and improved living conditions. Social networks also play a crucial role in facilitating migration decisions (Balkans Policy Research Group (BPRG) 2020). Researchers Dekker and Engebresen (2013) underscore the importance of social networks in facilitating migration, showing how established migrant communities can influence migration decisions.

Migration theories fail to fully explain factors influencing people's decisions to move, with push reasons being low incomes, unstable political contexts, poor living conditions, and employment prospects, and pull factors being better living standards (Castles, S. and Miller, M.J. 1998). Furthermore, Pierson's Policy Feedback Theory reveals that existing policies significantly influence future policymaking, particularly in Kosovo, where historical policy failures have led to ineffective governance and migration flow management challenges Balkan Policy Reports Group (2020).

Schiller's transnationalism theory (1992), explores how migrants maintain connections to their home countries while integrating into host societies. This framework helps explain Kosovo's migration persistence and the role of remittances in local economy. It's crucial for policymakers to address migrants' needs and their impact on their home countries.

In sum, these theoretical frameworks provide valuable insights into the complexities of migration and emphasize the importance of EBP in policy formulation. Scholars such as Argyrous (2012) and Green (2022) argue that policies grounded in empirical evidence promote transparency and accountability, ultimately benefiting migrant populations.

2.2 Empirical studies and policy implementation

The Balkan Policy Research Group (2021) highlights gaps in data collection and analysis in Kosovo's migration policies, hindering the use of Evidence-Based Policy (EBP). Political interference and nepotism, identified by the World Bank Group (2019), further undermine policy effectiveness, leading to inconsistent migration policies and uninformed decisions. According to Howlett et al., (2020) political meddling, bureaucracy, nepotism, lack of coordination among sectors, socio-cultural barriers, and public attitudes all contribute to the deterioration of public policy efficacy and decision-making processes (Stone 2012).

Additionally, BPRG (2021) in its report of Institutional Framework and Coordination determined that there is a lack of coordination among governmental, educational, and private sectors (2021). The fragmentation in migration institutions hinders a unified response, resulting in a lack of coherence, inclusivity, and accountability in addressing migration challenges. In addition, youth unemployment and aligning education with labor market needs also more coordination among government and private sector gap

The World Bank Group (2019) highlights that nepotism and political interference in public administration lead to inconsistent and ineffective migration policies, reducing policy implementation efficiency. Also, BRPG (2021) emphasizes the need for improved coordination between government, education, and private sectors to address youth unemployment in Kosovo, a region plagued by political instability, nepotism, and corruption. (Blazhevskia 2018). The lack of qualified career prospects and nepotism further contribute to this trend, as noted by Prof. O'Higgins (2001).

The European Agenda and Kosovo Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare's 2018-2020 Action Plan for Youth Employment aims to enhance youth employment and well-being, but has not been implemented (European Training Foundation 2020).

Sheldeva's (2021) study on policy coordination in North Macedonia highlights the positive impact of Evidence-Based Policy on migration outcomes, while Kasemets' (2015) Policy Making Review in Kosovo emphasizes the importance of cooperative methods in unique socio-political situations.

However, the study by Beqiri and Hoxha's (2022) study reveals a research gap in understanding Kosovo's migration challenges, particularly from a longitudinal perspective, due to significant deficiencies in existing studies (2022). The long-term effects of EBP on migration outcomes, such as community reintegration for returnees, also require further exploration (Argyrous 2012). Additionally, the analysis of 31 Kosovo government documents and Western Balkan regional examples reveals shared challenges and unique circumstances, highlighting significant differences in evidence-based policymaking (OECD 2022).

The literature on Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) and migration in Kosovo emphasizes the importance of empirical data in addressing migration challenges. Authors Hajdari and Krasniqi (2021) suggest leveraging diaspora remittances for local development, while the World Bank report highlights regional cooperation and data-sharing

initiatives for better migration management (2015).

However, among challenges to effective implementation of EBP in Kosovo is the lack of reliable data, which according to Argyrous (2012) undermines the ability to formulate well-informed policies. Political instability also plays a role, as frequent changes in government lead to inconsistent, often reactive migration policies, as noted by Head (2013) and Blazhevskia (2018). Also, the implementation of EBP in Kosovo (2022) faces challenges like lack of reliable data and political instability, leading to inconsistent, reactive migration policies due to frequent government changes (Yuliani, Larasati and Kismartini 2022).

2.3 Analysis of selected examples and Research Gaps

The Balkan Research Policy Group emphasizes the need for cooperation between Kosovo and Albania, advocating for joint data initiatives to support evidence-based policymaking, based on research on migration challenges in Kosovo (2021).

Kosovo can learn from migration policies in Serbia, North Macedonia, and Albania, highlighting the importance of collaborative approaches tailored to each country's socio-political context (OECD 2022). Additionally, Albania and Serbia are in the process of reforming their migration policies, which can provide valuable insights into the status of migration policies in Kosovo (Gerdeshi 2021, PAR 2022, Tadic 2018). Also, Lazarevic's study examines migration strategies in Kosovo and Serbia, highlighting the role of international organizations in promoting evidence-based approaches (2021). Finally, Tadic on EBP in Serbia study suggests learning from each other's successes and failures in integrating evidence into policy development (2018). The European Agenda and Kosovo Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare's 2018-2020 Action Plan for Youth Employment, aimed at enhancing youth employment and well-being, has not been effectively implemented (European Training Foundation 2020). The literature on Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) and migration in Kosovo emphasizes the importance of empirical data, remittances, regional cooperation, and data-sharing initiatives in addressing migration challenges, Yuliani, et. al., (2022).

Kosovo's governmental agencies lack resources for effective Evidence-Based Practices implementation, requiring capacity-building and training initiatives. Public perception of migration influences policy acceptance, requiring community engagement for inclusive development, as suggested by Yuliani, et. al. (2022).

The study emphasizes the significance of regional cooperation and joint data initiatives in Kosovo for implementing evidence-based policies, drawing on examples from Albania and Serbia (Blazhevskia 2018; OECD 2022).

The UN Economic Commission (2020) for Europe highlights research gaps in Kosovo on migration trends, socioeconomic effects, and Evidence-Based Policy impact, suggesting future studies should focus on technology's role. (Beqiri and Hoxha 2022; Hajdari and Krasniqi 2021).

3. Methodology

This qualitative research explores the complexities of migration policy in Kosovo, focusing on legislative frameworks, strategies, and actions plans. It provides rich, descriptive insights that quantitative methods may overlook. The study includes examples from regional countries like North Macedonia, Albania, and Serbia.

The analysis of above mention policies includes:

- Kosovo Migration Strategy: This foundational document outlines the government's vision and objectives for migration management.
- Action Plans: These plans detail specific initiatives and activities aimed at implementing the Migration Strategy.
- Legislative Frameworks: Various laws and regulations governing migration, asylum, and labor mobility were analyzed to understand the legal basis for migration governance.

3.1 Regional Similarities and Differences

Furthermore, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Albania share similarities in migration governance, facing socio-economic challenges like high unemployment and demographic shifts driving emigration (W. B. Group 2021). Their common past shapes the way each nation develops its immigration policies as it looks to deepen its relationship with the EU (2022). However, distinct socio-political circumstances lead to notable policy variations: Serbia, in EU accession negotiations, has adopted stricter border controls and anti-trafficking measures (E. Council 2022) while Kosovo focuses on reintegration and managing irregular migration, aiming for EU alignment despite not being in the Schengen Area, Unijat, et.al. (2019). As a candidate for the EU, Albania has changed its refugee policies and prioritizes diaspora involvement to support economic growth (E. Council 2022). Albania, an EU candidate, has shifted its refugee policies to support economic growth, while North Macedonia focuses on enhancing migrant integration and regulating transit migration on the Balkan route. These strategies are influenced by the unique conditions of each nation and the EU's goals (2022). Researcher Żornaczuk notes that stakeholder engagement in the policymaking process also differs; the extent of civil society involvement can vary, affecting the inclusivity and responsiveness of policies in each country (2014).

Moreover, in his article researchers King and Oruc (2018) and King and Gedeshi (2023), found that each nation responds uniquely to migration trends. For example, Kosovo may prioritize youth retention more aggressively, while other countries might focus on labor migration or family reunification. According to researchers Qejvani and Ollogu (2020) the legal frameworks governing migration vary in specificity and comprehensiveness, affecting their effectiveness. Economic conditions also shape distinct policy priorities, with Kosovo focusing on youth unemployment differently than Serbia, as noted in the Study Report on Balkan Youth Employment (2021). Lastly, the OECD Report on Labor Migration in the Western Balkans (2022) highlights that while all countries share a common historical narrative, the nuances

of their pasts create differing political climates and policy responses to migration challenges (2022). These similarities and differences underscore the complex and varied landscape of migration governance in the region (2022).

3.2 Justification of study period

The study of Kosovo's migration governance from 2017 to 2020 is crucial due to legislative changes and evolving migration trends. The delayed 2019-2023 strategy is being developed for 2021-2025, aligning with EU standards and focusing on evidence-based policy (Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo 2021). Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) is a method that utilizes the most reliable research and empirical evidence to guide policy decisions, integrating scientific data, expert analysis, and previous policy evaluations (Nutley, Walter and Davie 2007).

Furthermore, Kosovo is implementing a more integrated migration framework due to evolving migration patterns influenced by socio-economic factors and regional dynamics. The Prime Minister is working on the country's 2021-2025 Migration Strategy, which is still undergoing approval (Western Balkan Youth Lab 2021). Kosovo's EU integration has prompted the adoption of migration and asylum policies. Analyzing this period can help identify policy gaps, support data-driven decision-making, and evaluate the experiences of migrants, highlighting the challenges faced by government agencies and civil society (European Commission - Countries insights 2022).

The study used qualitative data analysis, supplemented by manual thematic analysis, and document content. However, methodological limitations include potential political, economic, and social context variations affecting generalizability and challenges with relying on archived documents, potentially causing incomplete or outdated information.

The study analyzes migration policy materials, including laws, strategies, action plans, and official reports, for relevance to Kosovo's Evidence-Based Policy and migration strategy. Selected examples from Kosovo and similar nations are used to examine policy formulation, implementation strategies, evidence utilization, and migration outcomes. Thematic analysis is employed to identify patterns and distinctive features.

4. Results

This study explores migration governance, emphasizing the importance of robust data and empirical research, and the integration of Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) concepts into institutional and legal frameworks. The study also investigates migration policies' effectiveness in addressing local labor market needs, skill shortages, and social cohesion, suggesting that implementing EBP can enhance youth retention strategies and strengthen governance.

The research analyzes across 31 official Kosovo government policies and related strategies: the Kosovo Migration Strategy, Action Plans, and Legislative Frameworks. It includes non-governmental publications and relevant national, regional, and global

sources, such as papers, action plans, legislation, governmental documents, and empirical research. These sources are organized into three tables based on migration-related issues.

Significant gaps exist in Kosovo's frameworks for employment and migration policy, particularly in areas such as the Active Labor Market Measures, which lack quantifiable results and clear goals (Tables 1, 2, and 3). The need for change is highlighted by the fact that 38% of youths aged 15 to 24 are unemployed, demonstrating how out of step current educational frameworks are with changing economic demands (The World Bank 2015).

Table 1 presents Kosovo's employment policies, including 2009 Law No. 03/L-145 on Youth Empowerment and Participation and the Law on Financial Management and Accountability, which focus on youth empowerment, labor market dynamics, active participation, and budgeting.

The National Strategy for Youth and Action Plan in Kosovo aims to address youth employment issues through Active Labor Market Measures (ALMM), with the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport leading policy implementation. The National Development Strategy and Action Plan for Youth Employment focus on increasing youth employability, reducing unemployment, and fostering sustainable career paths.

Table 2 outlines Kosovo's employment and public administration policies, their objectives, and implications for the labor market. According to Nagaki et.al. (2020), the Qualification Framework governs the market, but misalignments between qualifications and market demands contribute to youth unemployment. The Association for the Support of Education and Vocational Training (European Training Foundations, 2021) aims to improve the education system, but struggles with insufficient integration into real-world labor market needs. The Qualification Framework regulates the labor market, but misalignments between qualifications and market demands lead to youth unemployment, resulting in a skills gap (World Bank Group 2019).

The Skills Gap Analysis (2017) highlights a significant gap between education skills and employers' competencies, highlighting the need for educational reforms. O'Higgins' research on youth unemployment suggests local policies may not fully consider international trends, leading to ineffective responses (O'Higgins 2001). The Flexicurity Strategy from Denmark, combining labor market flexibility and security, has not been successfully implemented in Kosovo due to rigid labor laws and lack of social safety nets (2001).

Table 3 examines Kosovo's migration policies, focusing on their aims, ministries, and strategies. The Action Plan for Migration (2013-2018) and the National Strategy for Sustainable Reintegration of Repatriated Persons in Kosovo (2018-2022) were implemented to tackle irregular migration challenges and promote the socioeconomic reintegration of repatriated individuals into society (2017).

The National Strategy and Action Plan on Migration (2009-2012), as shown in Table 3, takes a reactive stance, ignoring the underlying reasons for young departure and

highlighting the necessity of a change to evidence-based policymaking. By taking inspiration from its neighbors, such as Serbia and North Macedonia, Kosovo might strengthen its policy frameworks, perhaps increasing youth retention, accountability, and transparency. However, the potential for successful employment and migration initiatives in Kosovo is still restricted if evidence is not included into policy creation. The draft Diaspora Strategy (2019-2023) aims to promote legal rights of the diaspora, acknowledging their crucial role in Kosovo's development. The Migration Strategy (2021-2025) focuses on facilitating legal migration and staying responsive to domestic and international trends (2017).

The Action Plan for the Implementation of the Migration Strategy (2021-2023) (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2023) aims to establish bilateral agreements for regular migration and promote international cooperation. The Plan for the Management of the Potential Flow of Migrants, Refugees, and Applicants for International Protection for 2021 focuses on managing migration influxes (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Kosovo 2021).

The Migration Services Division of the Kosovo Employment Agency prepares migration guidelines and regulations, while the Department of Consular Affairs within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs facilitates administrative services for emigration, providing necessary support and information.

TABLE 1 – EMPLOYMENT POLICIES - exclusively focuses on employment policies and the relevant government bodies.

(Source: this author)

POLICY	TITLE	AIM	MINISTRY
1. LAW	No.03/L-145 on Youth Empowerment and Participation 2009	Improve the situation of youth	The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports - Kosovo
2. LAW	Law on Public Financial Management and Accountability	Subject to budgeting	The Parliament of Kosovo
3. STRATEGY	The National Strategy for Youth and Action Plan 2019 - 2023	The National Strategy for Youth and Action Plan 2019 - 2023	The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Kosovo
4. POLICY	Active Labor Market Measures (ALMM)	Increasing youth employment in Kosovo	The Government of Kosovo
5. DOCUMENT	The Rules and Procedures document	Procedures and requirements – policy analysis	The Government of Kosovo
6. POLICY	Kosovo Agency on Statistics	Data collection	The Government of Kosovo

7. LAW	The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)	Promote development of public administration in the W. Balkans	The Government of Kosovo
8. STRATEGY	National Development Strategy 2022- 2030	Youth Employment	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Kosovo
9.ACTION PLAN	The Action Plan for Youth Employment for 2018-2020	Youth employment	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Kosovo

TABLE 2 – EMPLOYMENT AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION - focuses solely on employment and public administration policies, as well as the relevant government bodies. (Source: *this author*)

POLICY	TITLE	AIM	MILINSTRY
1. STRATEGY	Qualification Framework National Qualification Authority	Regulate the labor market-issuing qualifications	Kosovo Parliament, 2020
2. POLICY	The Assoc. for the Support of Education and Vocational Training Estab. in 2014	Develop the education system	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, Kosovo
3. REPORT	Study entitled “Skills Gap Analysis” 2017	Balance between the labor market and young education	American Chamber of Kosovo
4.RESEARCH	“Youth Unemployment and Policy: a global employment perspective”	Analysis of youth unemployment	O’Higgins (2001)
5.STRATEGY	Flexicurity which means flexibility + security	Strategy - labor market and active workforce	The Government of Denmark
6.STRATEGY	Guideline for Visa Liberalization	Criteria for visa liberalization	The European Union

7.REPORT	Public Administration Reforms in Kosovo	Impact assessment with EU laws	Balkan Policy Research Group, 2020
8. REPORT	Public Administration Reforms (PAR)	Public Administration Reforms (PAR)	EU-Albania, Public Administration Reform, 2022
9. REPORT	Strategjia Ndersektoriale e Reformes ne Administraten Publike 2015-2020*	Polycymaking-EBP	Ministria per Inovacion dhe Administraten Publike, Albania*
10. REPORT	Public Administration Reform Strategy 2018-2022	Analytical capacities-management coordination	Ministry of Information Society and Administration, North Macedonia.
11. REPORT	National study on the policy coordination processes in North Macedonia	National study on the policy coordination processes in North Macedonia	Shaldeva, Magdalena ReSPA

* Cross-Sectoral Strategy of Public Administration Reform 2015-2020

* Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration, Albania

TABLE 3 – MIGRATION –focuses solely on employment and public administration policies, as well as the relevant government bodies. (Source: this author)

POLICY	TITLE	AIM	MINISTRY
1. STRATEGY	National Strategy and Action Plan on Migration for 2009–2012	Managing legal migration	Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kosovo
2. STRATEGY	The Migration Strategy 2013– 2018	To advance and facilitate legal migration	Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kosovo
3. STRATEGY	The Action Plan for Migration 2013-2018	Preventing and combating irregular migration	Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kosovo

4. STRATEGY	The National Strategy for Sustainable Reintegration of Repatriated Persons in Kosovo 2018-2022	Ensure sustainable socioeconomic reintegration for repatriated persons	Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kosovo
5. STRATEGY	The draft Diaspora Strategy 2019–2023	Promote legal rights of the diaspora	The Government of Kosovo
6. DOCUMENT	Migration Strategy 2021- 2025	Advance and facilitate legal migration	Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kosovo
8. DOCUMENT	Action Plan for the Implementation of the Migration Strategy 2021- 2023	Initiate and reach bilateral agreements for regular migration	Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kosovo
9. DOCUMENT	Plan for the Management of the Potential Flow of Migrants, Refugees, and Applicants for International Protection for 2021	Plan and manage the flow of migrants	Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kosovo
10. POLICY	The Migration Services Division of the Kosovo	Prepare guidelines and regulations on migration rules	Employment Agency, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Kosovo
11. POLICY	Department of Consular Affairs	Facilitate the administrative services for emigration	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Department of Consular Affairs - Kosovo

These tables provide an overview of Kosovo's policies on youth empowerment, employment, public administration, and migration, highlighting the role of various ministries and governmental bodies in their implementation.

5. Discussion

The information in Tables 1, 2, and 3 has been analyzed in this part using the concepts of Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) and current labor market and migration theories. The analysis focused on validating the hypothesis: *“Implementing Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) in Kosovo’s public administration will enhance accountability, transparency,*

and effective policy delivery, thereby reducing youth emigration."

The policies presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3 offer insights into Kosovo's strategies for youth empowerment, employment, public administration, and migration. The analysis involves examining the data in conjunction with relevant literature to highlight key insights and perspectives from other authors on the relevant topics in order to identify what other scholars have emphasized on these topics. It explores how Kosovo's current migration and labor policies align with established theories and identifies gaps within the existing policy framework. Additionally, the analysis evaluates whether the data supports or contradicts previous studies, addresses the limitations of this research, and highlights areas where Kosovo's migration management strategies are ineffective. Regional examples are also incorporated into the analysis.

Analysis of Data from Table 1: Youth Empowerment and Employment Policies

Table 1 indicates that Kosovo's youth unemployment rate remains alarmingly high at 38% among those aged 15-24, with youth migration continuing as a significant trend. This is a critical concern, as it highlights the mismatch between the supply of young workers and the availability of quality jobs in Kosovo, driving many young people to emigrate (World Bank Group 2019). The Push-Pull Theory (Lee, 1966) provides a useful framework for understanding this data. The push factors include high unemployment, lack of job security, and economic stagnation in Kosovo. These push factors are exacerbated by economic instability and limited employment prospects, which drive youth to migrate in search of better opportunities. Conversely, pull factors in destination countries include a stronger economy, better labor market conditions, and opportunities for social mobility (Lee, 1966).

In addition, the data reinforces what has been argued by Koser (2007), who found that economic hardship is a primary driver of emigration from post-conflict states like Kosovo. Similarly, the World Bank Group (2019) points to the high rate of youth unemployment as a key driver of migration, especially among the educated youth. In addition, Kosovo's youth unemployment and empowerment strategies, including the Youth Empowerment and Participation Law and the National Strategy for Youth and Action Plan 2019-2023, align with international efforts to address the challenges of youth integration into the labor market. However, these policies appear to be in tension with the findings of scholars like O'Higgins (2001), who emphasized the mismatch between education and employment markets.

Furthermore, Kosovo's high youth unemployment rate is in line with findings from other Balkan countries such as Albania and North Macedonia, which have similarly faced high youth unemployment in recent years, though North Macedonia's rate (28.7%) is slightly lower (European Commission, 2020). Both these countries have recognized youth unemployment as a major barrier to economic development and have started implementing policies aimed at enhancing youth employment. Kosovo could benefit from adopting similar approaches, particularly those focusing on job creation in both urban and rural areas, as well as through investment in vocational training.

Policy analysis and gaps identified

Although Kosovo has made efforts to improve its labor market by introducing Active Labor Market Policies (ALMPs), these policies have had limited success in reducing youth unemployment. ALMPs are not sufficiently tailored to the local context, and there is often a lack of coordination between education, training programs, and the labor market. This gap in policy integration exacerbates the issue of youth migration. Kosovo's labor market policies tend to be fragmented, reactive, and short-term rather than comprehensive and sustainable. The implementation of EBP in Kosovo's policymaking could significantly improve these programs by making them more data-driven and long-term oriented. By systematically assessing the effectiveness of current policies and integrating feedback loops, Kosovo could create more targeted initiatives that address the root causes of youth unemployment and provide concrete, sustainable opportunities for young people.

Analysis of Data from Table 2: Educational Mismatch and Labor Market Needs

Table 2 highlights the mismatch between educational outcomes in Kosovo and the actual needs of the labor market. It provides critical insights into how Kosovo's educational system is failing to equip its youth with the skills required for available jobs. This mismatch is a key contributor to high youth unemployment and subsequent emigration. In addition, results show that significant percentage of youth graduates from Kosovo's higher education system lack the practical skills that employers in the labor market demand. Furthermore, the data also shows that while a large proportion of students graduate with academic qualifications, the availability of skilled jobs is far below the number of qualified graduates (Balkan Policy Research Group, 2020). There is an overrepresentation of graduates in fields such as social sciences, humanities, and arts, while demand is concentrated in fields like engineering, information technology, and vocational trades. Likewise, the OECD (2022) reports that Kosovo's education system overproduces graduates in fields where there is low demand and underproduces workers with vocational and technical training. The lack of strong career guidance and effective vocational training programs exacerbates the issue, making it difficult for youth to find gainful employment in the country. The OECD (2022) emphasizes the need for reforms in education and vocational training to align more closely with the needs of the private sector.

Moreover, the researcher Green (2022) also supports this view, stating that vocational education and training systems should be designed to closely mirror labor market demand, particularly in regions where youth unemployment is a significant problem. He highlights the importance of partnerships between educational institutions and industry stakeholders to create training programs that match the skills required by employers (Green, 2022). As well, the Dual Labor Market Theory (Doeringer & Piore, 1971) suggests that labor markets are segmented into a primary sector—well-paying, skilled jobs, and a secondary sector—low-paying, unskilled jobs.

In line with this theory, In Kosovo, many youth graduates are entering the secondary sector, while the primary sector, which requires skilled professionals, remains underdeveloped due to the lack of graduates with the appropriate vocational or

technical skills. This results in underemployment and youth migration and this limits the employability of youth graduates and drives them to seek opportunities abroad, where their academic qualifications may be more directly aligned with the labor market demands (Balkan Policy Research Group, 2020). Likewise, the Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) emphasize that the mismatch between education and labor market needs stems lack of investment in relevant skills development.

Similarly, to Kosovo, Albania has struggled with high youth unemployment and a mismatch between skills and labor market needs. However, Albania has made progress by strengthening its vocational education system. By partnering with local businesses, Albania has tailored vocational programs to meet the private sector's needs, improving workforce employability (Balkan Policy Research Group, 2021). Kosovo could adopt a similar approach, fostering stronger connections between educational institutions and local businesses to better align skills with labor market demands.

In addition, The OECD report (2020) on education and employment in the Western Balkans emphasizes that North Macedonia has also implemented reforms in its educational and vocational training systems to better align them with labor market demands. By improving career guidance, increasing internship opportunities, and focusing on technical and vocational training, North Macedonia has been able to reduce some of the youth unemployment rates, particularly in areas like engineering and IT (OECD, 2020). Kosovo could adopt similar approaches, expanding its vocational training programs and focusing on the specific needs of labor market

Similar to Albania, Serbia has made notable strides in vocational education by collaborating with the private sector and implementing a dual education system, where students gain practical work experience alongside their studies. This approach has helped bridge the gap between education and employment, equipping youth with industry-relevant skills (OECD, 2020). Kosovo could benefit from adopting similar initiatives, incorporating apprenticeship programs and work-study opportunities into its education system to better prepare students for the job market.

Policy analysis and gaps identified - Kosovo's education policies are not well-suited to the current needs of the labor market. The lack of vocational training programs and career orientation leaves students with limited practical skills, pushing them toward overrepresented academic fields. The result is that many graduates are unable to find relevant jobs, either leading to underemployment or migration. While there are some vocational training initiatives in Kosovo, they are often disconnected from the private sector and lack the scale and targeted focus needed to address the specific skills gaps in the labor market (Balkan Policy Research Group, 2020).

Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) can help in Kosovo by analyzing labor market trends and aligning education curricula. It also involves monitoring and evaluating vocational training programs to meet evolving needs. Stronger collaboration between educational institutions and industry sectors is needed to train youth in highly demanded skills. This could lead to internship programs, apprenticeships, and industry-based training, improving youth employability and reducing migration incentives.

Analysis of data from table 3: Migration Policies

Kosovo's National Strategy on Migration and the Action Plan for Migration 2021-2023 have been formally adopted by the Government of Kosovo. However, their implementation has been significantly delayed and hampered by a range of institutional and structural challenges. While the documents outline comprehensive strategies to manage migration, including reducing irregular migration, strengthening border control systems, enhancing labor migration policies, and improving the integration of returnees, the actual implementation has faced various obstacles. These obstacles include weak institutional capacity, limited inter-agency coordination, capacity building and the lack of political will (Balkan Policy Research Group 2020).

Considering the fact that migration is a pressing issue in Kosovo with thousands of young people leaving annually in search of better economic opportunities (World Bank Group, 2019), this highlights the urgent need for evidence-informed strategies that create sustainable employment opportunities and retain talent within the country. The Kosovo Labor Force Survey (2019) revealed a staggering youth unemployment rate, illustrating the economic constraints driving many to migrate (World Bank Group, 2019). In contrary, current Kosovo's migration policies usually address the efforts to reintegrate returnees, reflect an understanding of these dynamics, to improve legal migration, but they often fail to address the root causes of migration, such as unemployment and poor living conditions (European Training Foundation, 2020).

In addition, the National Strategy for Sustainable Reintegration of Repatriated Persons 2018-2022 (Beqiri & Hoxha, 2022) reflect Kosovo's recognition of the need for effective reintegration policies. However, there are significant gaps in these policies, particularly in terms of aligning returnees' skills with labor market needs in term of effective mechanism for the integration of returnees into the labor market. The lack of targeted support for returnees, as well as the limited integration of migrant labor into the domestic economy, remains a significant challenge (Beqiri & Hoxha, 2022). As noted by Kasemets (2015), Kosovo's policy outcomes are often hindered by limited capacity for regulatory assessments and the lack of a comprehensive public consultation process (BPRG, 2021).

The literature supports the notion that good governance is crucial for successful migration management. According to the researcher Mettler and Soss (2004) positive policy feedback loops emerge when policies are effectively implemented, creating a reinforcing cycle of trust and efficacy. However, Kosovo's institutional weaknesses prevent such feedback loops from forming. Kosovo's employment and migration policies are promising, but they remain largely ineffective due to structural inefficiencies and a lack of empirical data. The literature highlights several areas for improvement, there is a critical need for better coordination between youth empowerment, employment, public administration, and migration policies (BPRG, 2021).

Policy analysis and gaps identified - Kosovo's policies lack EBP, where lack sufficient

data and research-based frameworks, which hinders their ability to address the real causes of unemployment and migration (OECD, 2022). Addressing these gaps through improved data collection, better coordination, and stronger alignment with labor market needs will be key to making Kosovo's policies more effective and sustainable. In this case, EBP could enhance accountability, transparency, and policy effectiveness by addressing these institutional shortcomings (Bryan Head, 2013). If Kosovo's public administration adopted EBP, it could strengthen its institutional framework by using data to design better regulations, conduct impact assessments, and engage citizens in the policymaking process.

The validation of the hypothesis is further strengthened by these findings mentioned above. In synthesis, the findings from tables 1, 2, and 3 largely support the hypothesis that implementing EBP in Kosovo's public administration will enhance accountability, transparency, and effective policy delivery, thereby reducing youth emigration. The high youth unemployment rate and labor market segmentation are key drivers of migration, and EBP can address these issues by providing data-driven strategies for improving job creation and aligning education with market needs (Hajdari and Krasniqi 2021). This highlights the necessity of strengthening governance and improving administrative capacities to enable the effective use of evidence-based strategies (Beqiri and Hoxha 2022).

If Kosovo invests in capacity-building and institutional reform, EBP could significantly reduce youth emigration by fostering better job opportunities, addressing labor market segmentation, and increasing transparency in policy implementation (Yuliani, Larasati and Kismartini 2022). For instance, by using data to better understand the skills mismatch between young people and job market demands, EBP could promote policies that improve youth employment outcomes (European Commission, 2022). Programs aimed at bridging the gap between educational outcomes and labor market needs, such as industry partnerships for internships and apprenticeships, could create a pathway to the primary labor market for youth. This would reduce labor market segmentation and, consequently, decrease the motivation for youth to migrate.

6. Conclusion

This section summarizes the key findings from the analysis of the data presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3, focusing on the challenges of youth unemployment, skills mismatch, and the impact of current policies in Kosovo.

The data shows high youth unemployment in Kosovo, largely due to a skills mismatch between the education system and labor market needs. Many graduates lack practical, industry-relevant skills, highlighting the need for more vocational training and skills development.

Kosovo's policies have been ineffective, hindered by limited institutional capacity and poor stakeholder engagement. Regional examples from Albania and North Macedonia show that vocational reforms and private sector partnerships can reduce youth unemployment, suggesting Kosovo could benefit from similar strategies.

The analysis supports the hypothesis that Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) can improve policy effectiveness and reduce youth migration. By using data-driven strategies, Kosovo could better align education with labor market needs, increasing employability and reducing migration pressures. Implementing EBP in education and vocational training would make youth more job-ready and help address the root causes of emigration.

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