

BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES



Doctoral School of Business Administration

DOCTORAL THESIS

Presented and defended publicly by the author:

Ulrike Stefanie Foerster Pastor (Foerster-Metz)

Title of doctoral thesis:

Bridging the skills gap: An actors proximity-based framework based on
business networks for the Knowledge Intensive Service Industry

Scientific Supervisor: Prof. univ. dr. GABRIELA ȚIGU

Defence committee of PHD Thesis:

1. Prof. univ. dr. VASILIU Cristinel
2. Prof. univ. dr. NISTOR Răzvan-Liviu
3. Prof. univ. dr. COSMA Smaranda-Adina
4. Prof. univ. dr. SCHIOPU Andreea-Fortuna
5. Prof. univ. dr. ȚIGU Gabriela

Bucharest, 2024

SUMMARY

The economic, social, and demographic structure of a region, influenced by megatrends, significantly affects its competitiveness. This thesis investigates the intricate interplay between sectoral changes, educational factors, and megatrends to identify drivers that enhance competitiveness in transitioning economies. The study focuses mainly on the Knowledge Intensive Services Sector, observing its role and contribution in economic development. The research aims to understand variables that support ongoing economic transformation in transitioning countries. Thereby skilled human capital plays an important role.

The first three chapters of the thesis focus on understanding the concepts of competitiveness, mega trends and understanding the interplay with Higher Education and Employability concepts. Then the importance and characteristics of the service sector as well as its contribution to economic growth are highlighted. Special attention is given to Knowledge Intensive Services. The last three chapters of the thesis pertain to the author's research and contributions. Chapter 4 provides an in-depth analysis of technological advancements on the Knowledge Intensive Services sector, focusing on induced skill requirements and job transitions by digital technology. The study identifies key skills for the industry and clarifies the transformations that occupations will suffer in the industry. Chapter 5 examines students' awareness of employability in emerging sectors such as the green and digital-driven industries, considering that emerging industry knowledge is substantial for the correct allocation of human resources in the employment market. Furthermore, the chapter stresses the need for awareness campaigns and sectoral curriculum integration to better prepare students for the evolving job market. Chapter 6 discusses the critical role of academia-industry collaboration in closing the skills gap. The study's main contribution is the presentation of an actors proximity framework for cooperation centred on a business network, highlighting barriers and enablers.

The thesis concludes that collaborative approaches are essential for enhancing human capital productivity and competitiveness in the face of megatrends, and should be used in the Knowledge Intensive Sectors. Policymakers and society should focus on fostering such collaborations to ensure sustainable economic growth. Further research is recommended to implement the proposed framework and validate its practical application.

KEY WORDS: Knowledge Intensive Services, Employability Skills, Higher education, University Industry Collaboration, Business networks.

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