

## From university to labour market in the 21st century:

a step forward in work-based placements

UniLab

### THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

National Report



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study is to find out how the interaction of universities and companies in the Republic of Belarus is organized in terms of work-based learning (WBL) opportunities created for students.

Within the study a survey of employers was carried out to identify the features of the organization of student internships.

In addition, the study explains the legal aspects of internships organization in Belarus.

The research results will contribute to a better understanding of the current situation and will help in developing a WBL model for higher educational institutions (HEIs) of Belarus.



## METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out through data collection, desk research, and employers survey. The collected data was analyzed to form an idea of how the WBL is being held in Belarus and what is the level of interaction between employers and universities during student internships.

### **Desk review**

The main regulatory documents governing the organization of the WBL in the Republic of Belarus were studied. The main provisions of these documents are presented in the corresponding section of this report.

### **Survey**

The employers survey was conducted by the two universities-partners of UniLab using personal contacts, email and the GoogleSurvey tool.

More than 40 private and state companies from various fields of activity were interviewed. The survey analysis is presented in the relevant section of this report.



## INTERNSHIP ORGANIZATION

Internship is a compulsory component of higher education in the Republic of Belarus. The internship is organized according to “Regulations on the practice of students, cadets, listeners” approved by decree of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus 03.06.2010 № 860.

The duration and content of internship depends on educational standards and curriculum of different specialties. The main objectives of internship are mastering of practical skills and students’ preparation for professional activity. The internship program includes tasks which students should complete during their internship (collecting, processing and analyzing information about the organization’s activities, studying the technology and organization of production, participating in the organization’s production and management activities, etc.)

Internship is divided into learning and industrial. Industrial internship includes internship in the specialty and undergraduate internship.

The objectives of learning internship are the training of students’ practical skills in the subjects studied, consolidation of theoretical knowledge, development of primary skills in the chosen specialty. This type of internship is organized within educational organizations or organizations whose activity corresponds to the chosen specialty. The duration of internship is usually about 2 weeks.

The objectives of internship in the specialty are the acquisition of professional skills in the specialty, consolidation, expansion and systematization of knowledge obtained during the study of special educational disciplines. This internship is organized within organizations whose activity corresponds to the chosen specialty. The duration of internship is usually about 4 weeks (1 month).

The objectives of undergraduate internship are mastering and consolidating the knowledge and skills of students acquired in higher education institutions, checking the possibilities of work as a specialist, preparing materials for a graduation paper. This internship is organized within organizations whose activity corresponds to the chosen specialty. Students can perform some operations provided by official duties of respective position during the undergraduate practice. Students can also be hired for vacant positions in accordance with the law during the undergraduate practice. The duration of internship is usually about 4-10 weeks (1-2,5 months).

The internship is organized on the base of a contract concluded with the organization.



The general management of the internship in the institution of higher education is usually carried out by the head of internship from the institution of higher education, while direct management is carried out by the supervisor from the department.

The internship of students in the organization's departments is managed by an experienced employee of the organization, who is appointed by the order of the head of the organization.

While undertaking the internship, the student reflects the progress of its implementation in the internship diary. The tutor provides a written assessment to the student in the diary of internship.

At the end of the internship period, the student composes a report and gets a mark for it.



## RESULTS OF SURVEY

In the context of the UniLab project, 41 companies were surveyed in the Republic of Belarus.

In Mogilev region 23 companies were surveyed, belonging to different branches of economy: Industry, Energetics, Agriculture, Building, Transport, Trade, Banks and Other (IT, timber industry, education, consulting). 13 of them are large companies with more than 250 employees, 8 small companies with less than 100 employees (Fig. 1). The analysis of information was conducted in general and for small and large companies separately.

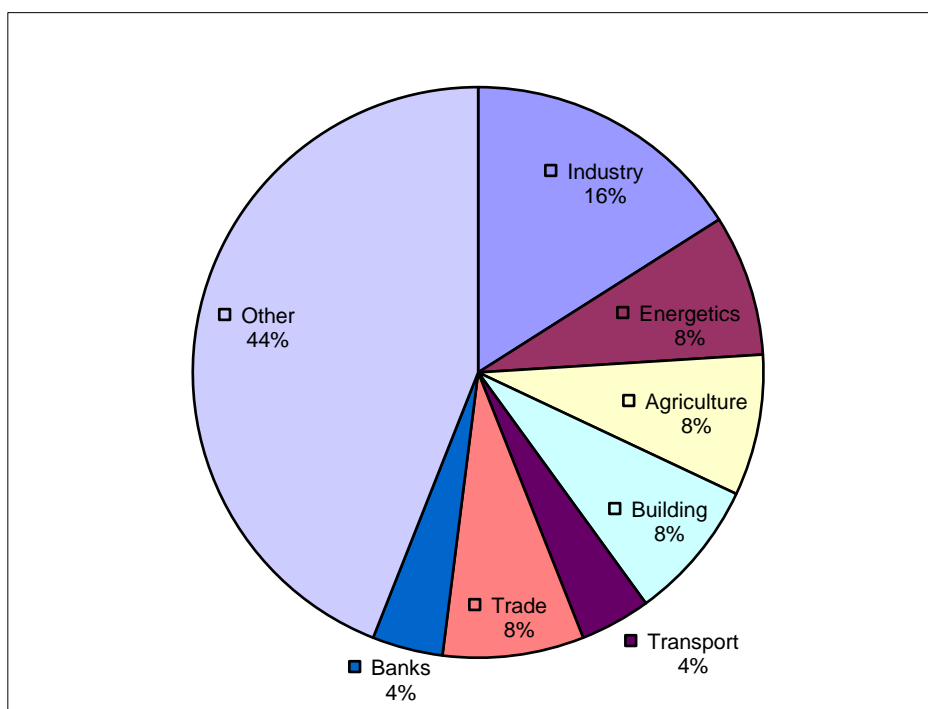


Fig. 1 – Companies surveyed in Mogilev



In Gomel region 18 companies were surveyed, mostly educational organizations (44,5%). 13 of them are small companies with less than 100 employees, 5 are regional departments of large companies (Fig. 2). The analysis of information was conducted in general because most of the organizations are similar in size and kind of activity.

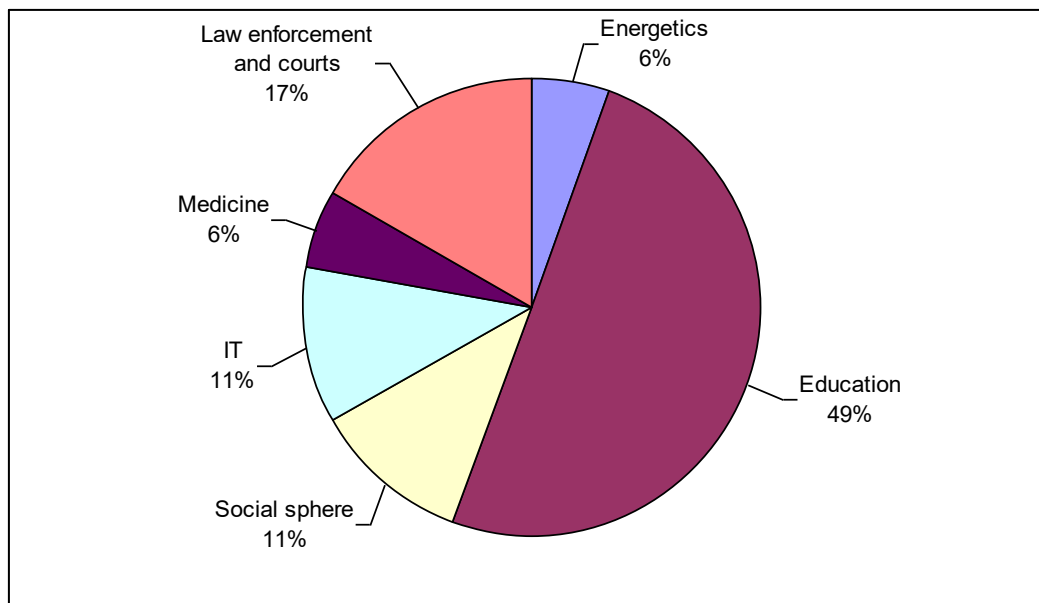


Fig. 2 – Companies surveyed in Gomel

Most of the companies (85%) do interact with universities with regards to internship issues. The remaining 15% do not consider this issue as a priority for the company.

In Mogilev the most popular forms of cooperation are in relation to students' internships in the company, recruitment of graduates for permanent employment in the company, participation of company representatives as supervisors and reviewers of diploma papers and cooperation with university departments (Fig. 3).

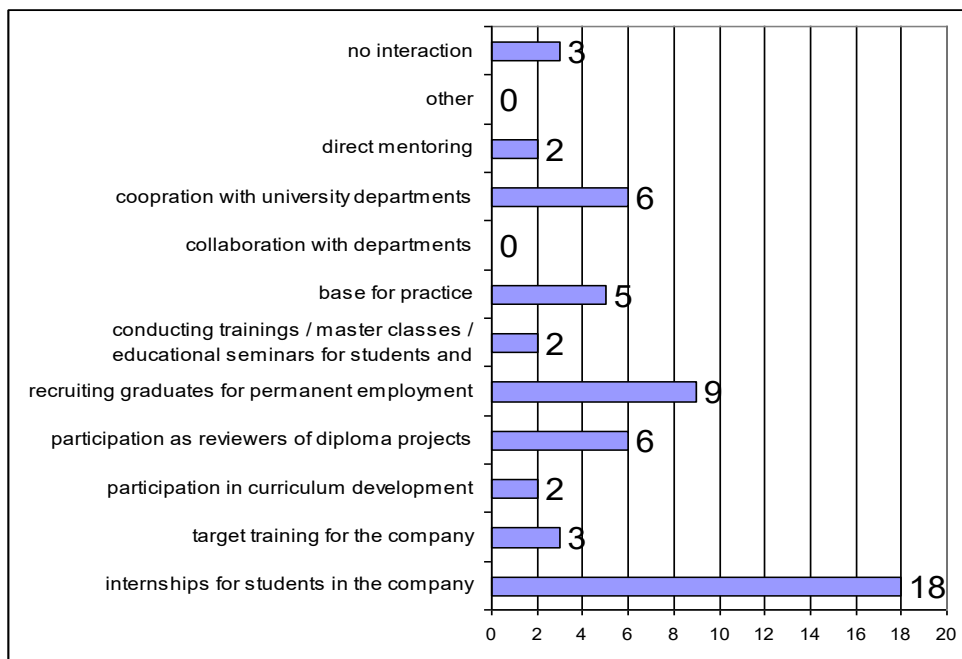


Fig. 3 – Forms of cooperation in Mogilev

In Gomel the most popular forms of cooperation are internships for students in the company, recruiting graduates for permanent employment in the company, cooperation with university departments, base for internship and direct mentoring (Fig. 4).

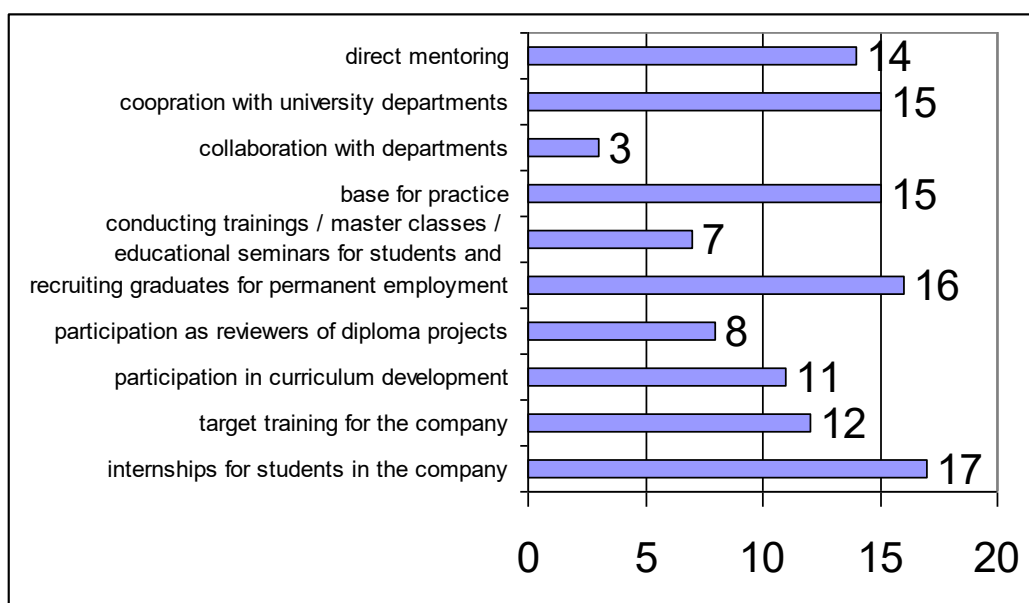


Fig. 4 – Forms of cooperation in Gomel

The responsibility for working with students usually lays on specialists (78% in Mogilev and 100% in Gomel), such as HR-managers and supervisors of internship. 4 large companies have specialized departments. 96% of Mogilev companies and 57% of Gomel companies declared that their specialists need no training because they are competent enough. Nine respondents would like to have some form of training in cooperation with universities to improve qualification, obtain master’s degree or have pedagogical courses.

83% of companies have local regulations governing internship, usually internship orders and orders for appointing supervisors of internship. 4 companies have orders on access to information (access level). 8 companies do not have any local regulations.

The most popular type of activities performed by students during the internships are observation, technical work with documents (copying, systematization, etc.), analytical work with documents, participation in production (Fig. 5). In Gomel rather frequent operations are execution of current operations (as an assistant) and creative work (Fig. 6).

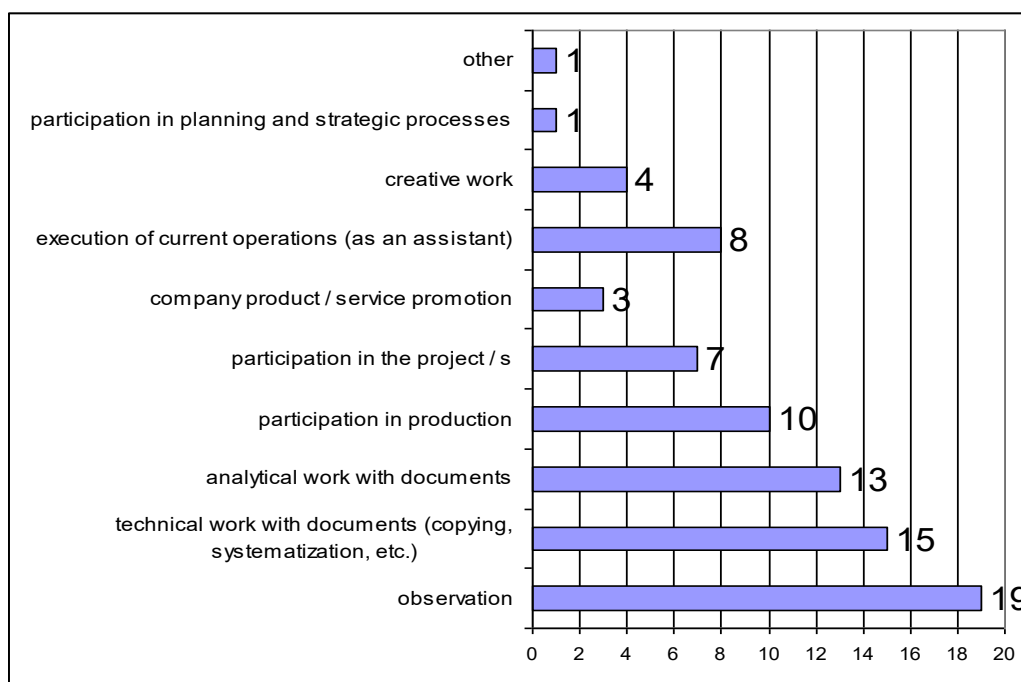


Fig. 5 – Tasks during the internship in Mogilev

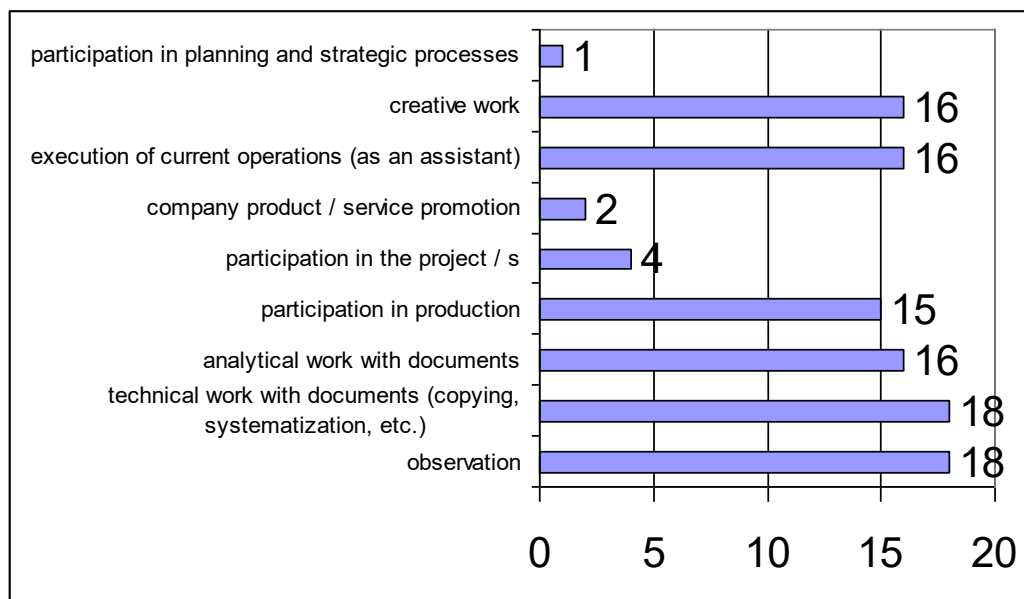


Fig. 6 – Tasks during the internship in Gomel

Students are paid for their internship in 3 large and 1 small companies, that is only 13% of the companies which were surveyed. 78% of students were not paid, 9% were paid partially.

The most popular form of student registration for internship in Mogilev is an individual agreement for the single student (70%). 16% of companies conclude an agreement with the university. One company uses oral agreement. These figures may show the tendency to take to internship some certain students, not every student.

In Gomel the situation is the opposite: 83% of companies conclude an agreement with the university, 17% conclude an individual agreement for the single student. This fact may be connected with peculiarities of educational organizations.

The evaluation of students' level shows that students show poor level of practical skills (2,65), ability to apply skills in a practical situation (2,65) and ability to quick response in unusual situations (2,6). High marks were expressed by companies in relation to students' ability to acquire new knowledge and skills (3,45). In Gomel students' marks were higher. It should be mentioned that small companies put lower marks to students' abilities. It may be due to the fact that well-trained students have more chance to work for large company, or maybe in small companies the results of work of each student could be better evaluated (Fig.7).

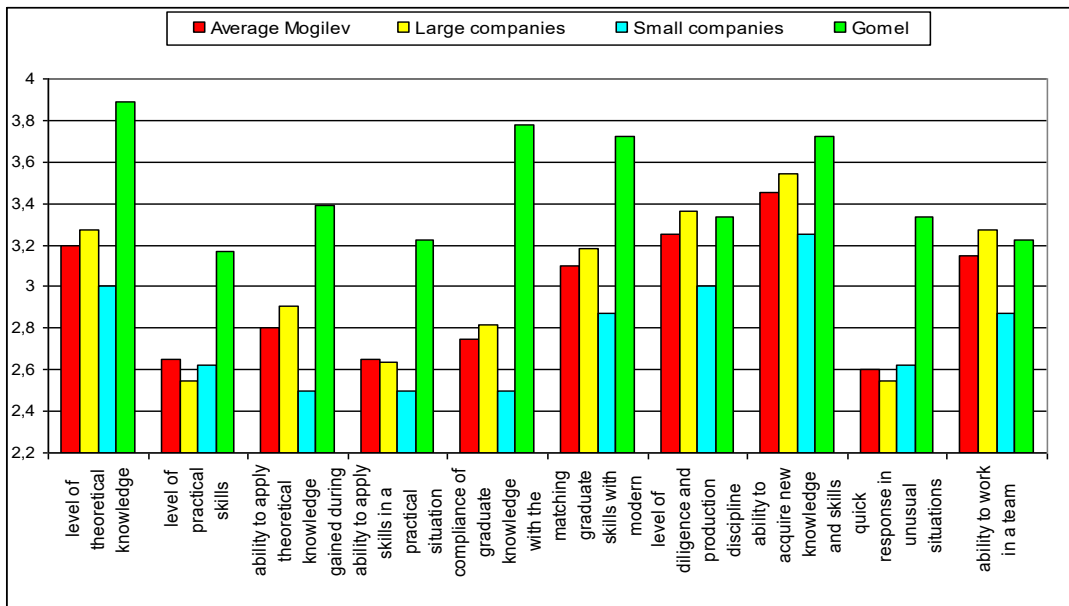


Fig. 7 – Assessment of students' level

The list of the main students' limitations corresponds quite well to the responses given to the question on students' level. Nobody named low learning ability (the ability to acquire new knowledge and skills got the highest mark). Such limitation as lack of practical training was named 30 times (the level of practical skills and ability to apply skills in a practical situation get low marks). Such limitations as special motivation, lack of desire to work and distorted ideas (expectations) about the structure of the company were mentioned 25, 20 and 19 times (Fig. 8).

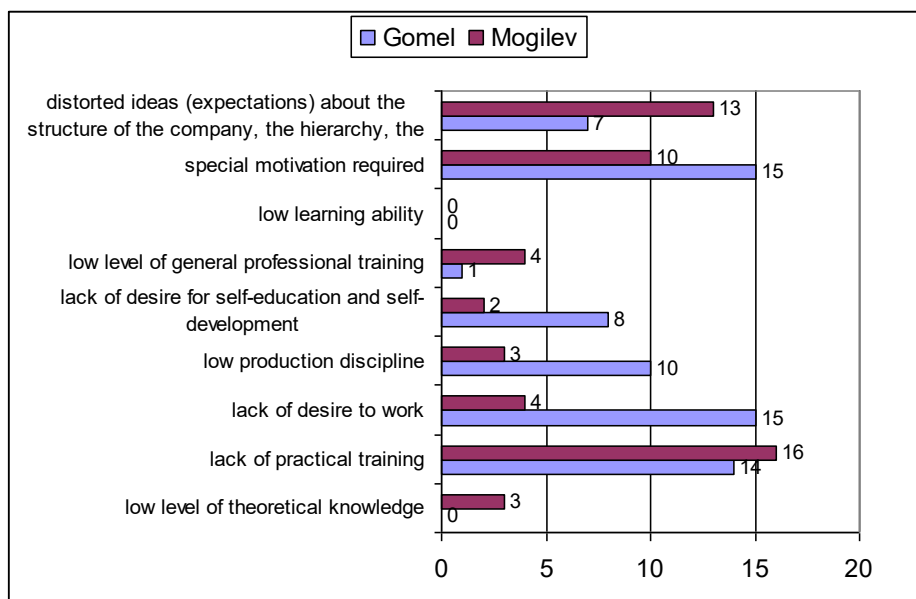


Fig. 8 – Limitations of students

The most popular methods to train students are specialist consultations and mentoring. In Mogilev provision of documents and technical briefing are frequently combined. Five small companies included students in working groups, three large companies provide special trainings for students (Fig. 9).

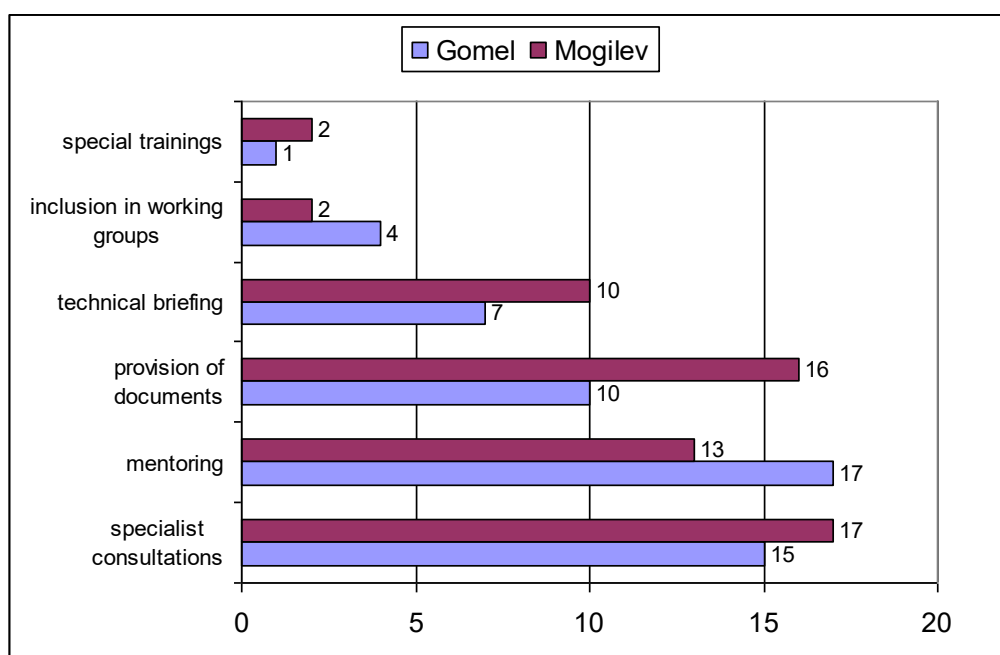


Fig. 9 – Methods of training

33 companies (80%) foresee an assessment of the internship and skills. As a rule, this entails the use of an internship diary. This diary is a mandatory document for internship in the Republic of Belarus. In addition, companies send an assessment to the university (5 cases) or use informal/oral assessment (3 cases). The 360-degree assessment method is not applied at all.

The most popular kind of interactions with universities in Mogilev is through contacts with university departments. Almost equal are interactions with directors of institutes / departments, with individual teachers and personal contacts (formal and informal) (Fig. 10). It should be mentioned that 50% of large companies prefer to interact with university departments while 50% of small companies establish personal contacts. In Gomel all kinds of interactions are used equally. There is no interaction with career centers because these institutions are not developed well in Belarus.

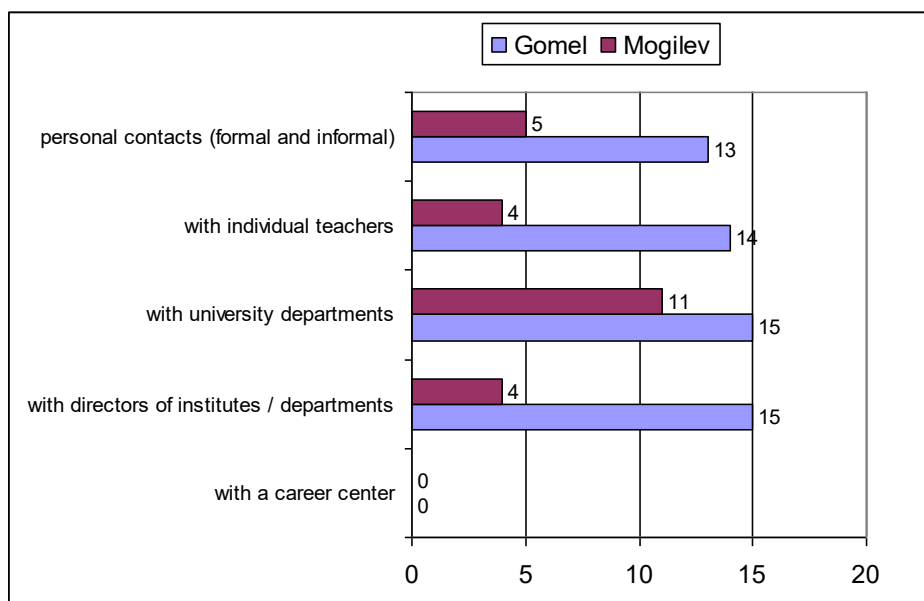


Fig. 10 – Kinds of interactions with universities

Company’s willingness to provide internship in Mogilev was evaluated as good, small companies put 3, large put 3,27. In Gomel this evaluation is 3,84, that is very high. The reason of high evaluation may be that educational organizations have lack of personnel.

To increase the effectiveness of organizing student’ internship companies suggested including students in the project team, to pay students for their internship, improve the interaction between the company and the university (Fig. 11).

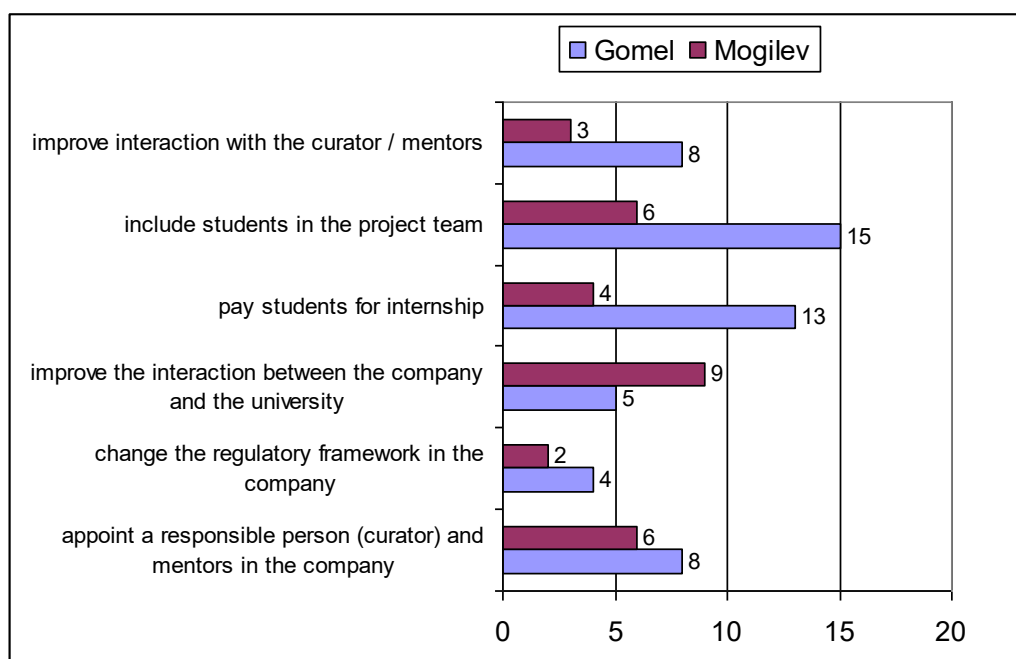


Fig. 11 – Ways of improving internship

As for the readiness of companies to employ students after internships, in Mogilev 52% of companies are not ready, 48% are ready; in Gomel 6% are not ready, 94% are ready. The main reasons of not employing students are because this is a minor priority for the company, the lack of vacancies and the insufficient resources for training (Fig. 12). The difference between two regions could be explained by the fact that in Mogilev there were questioned mostly industrial enterprises which now have some limitations in growth due to difficult economic situation, but in Gomel were questioned educational organizations which have shortage of teaching personnel due to low salary.

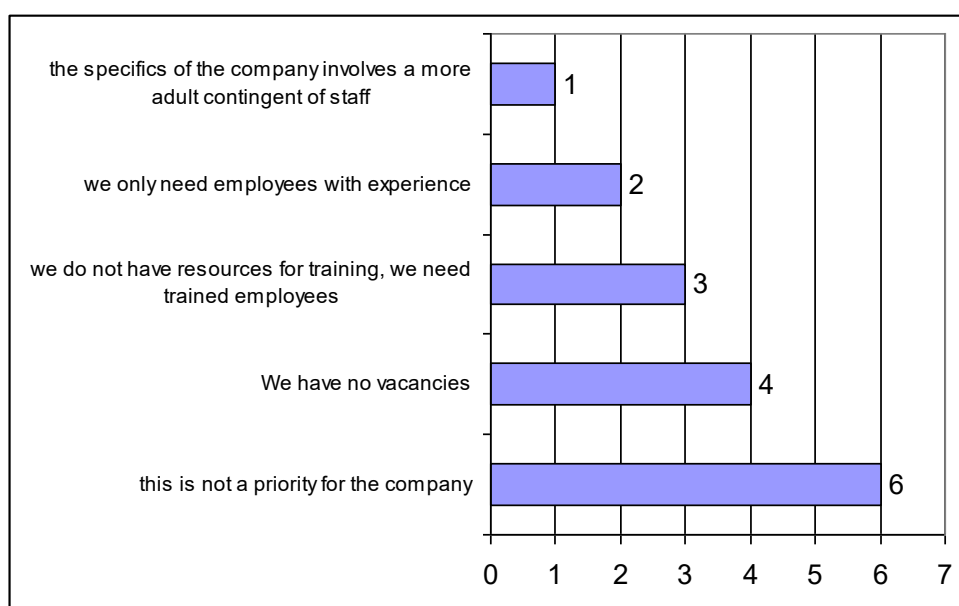


Fig. 12 – Reasons of not employing students (Mogilev)



In Mogilev graduates are usually employed in companies after internship at the company, by vacancy announcement and by internal employment (personnel reserve). In Gomel more popular methods are targeted admission, the request of the company, the direction of the university. Recruiting companies are not active in the Republic of Belarus (Fig.13).

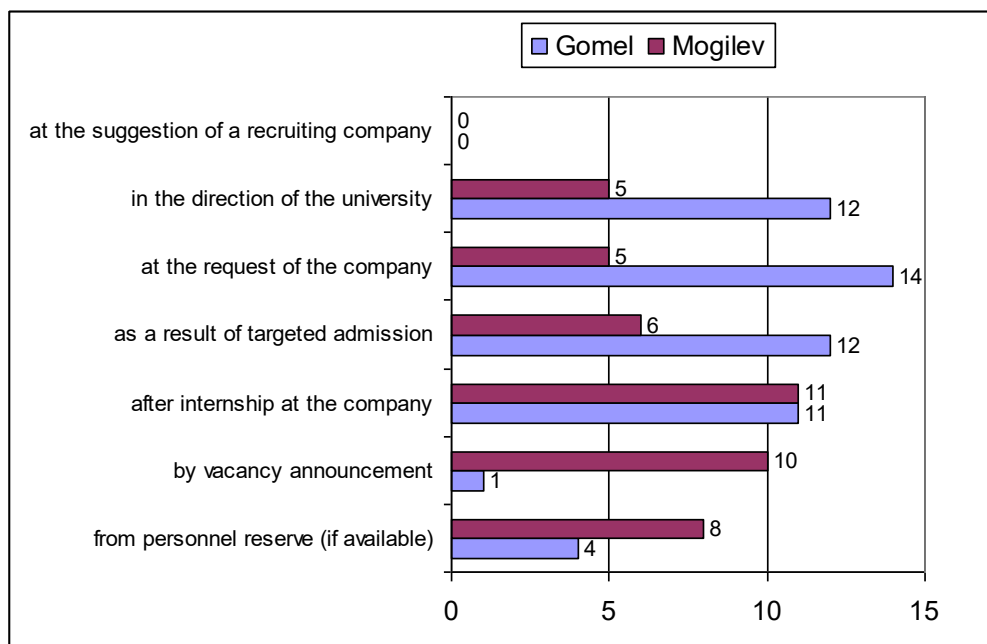


Fig. 13 – Ways of employing students

The main criteria of employment are diploma (as a document verifying higher education), knowledge and competencies. In Mogilev companies pay attention to the student’s learning ability and determination, in Gomel they look to the Grade Point Average and internship in the company. It should be mentioned that small companies pay more attention to erudition and recommendations, while large companies take into account also family dynasties (Fig. 14).

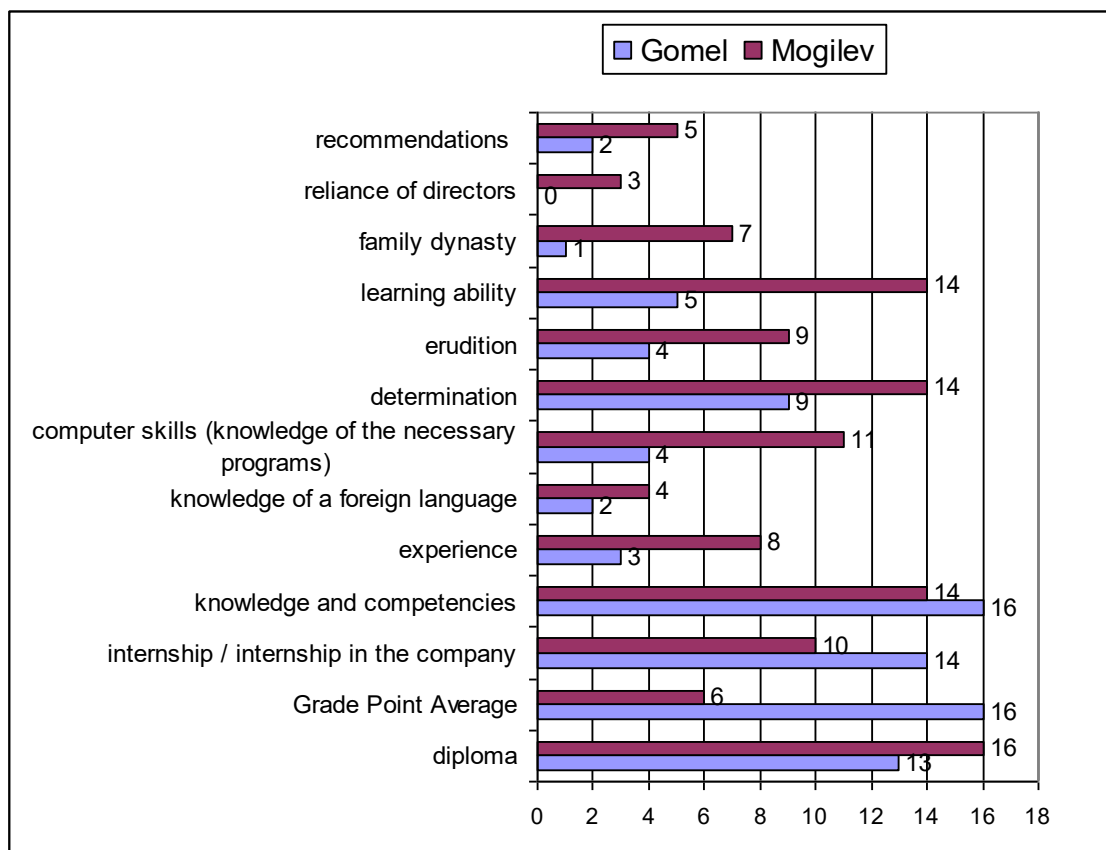


Fig. 14 – Criteria of employing students

The main method of assessing potential employees is an interview (Fig. 15). Small companies use some additional methods (verification of recommendations, questioning, professional tests) more actively than large companies. Case and stress testing are not popular methods.

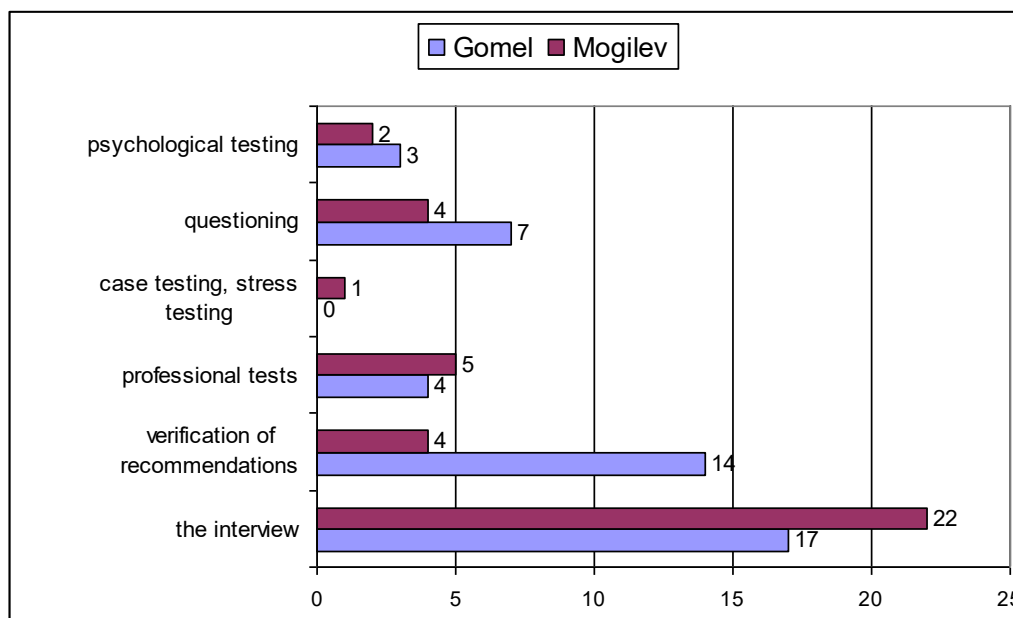


Fig. 15 – Methods of assessment of potential employees

Companies state that students mostly bring to the organization new ideas and new methods of communication (Fig. 16).

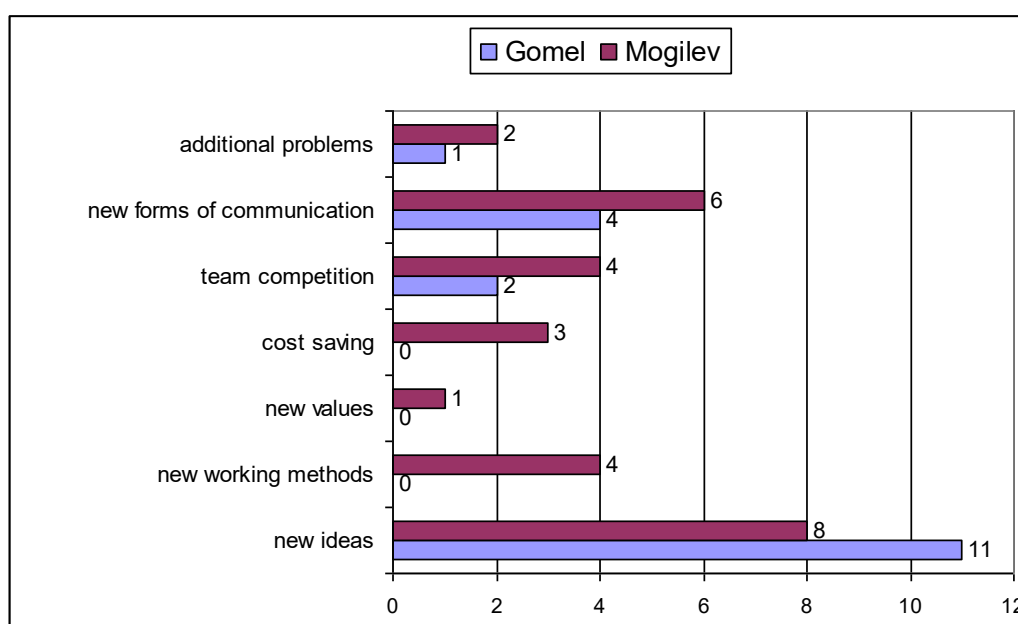


Fig. 16 – What do students bring to company

The percentage of students employed after internships is about 35% average, though it varies from 1% to 100% depending on the companies.

Finally, 74% of companies in Mogilev are not ready to accept more students for internship. The main reasons are the lack of vacancies and the low priority of this issue. In Gomel 89% are ready to accept more students for internship. This difference is connected with peculiarities of surveyed organizations (Fig. 17).

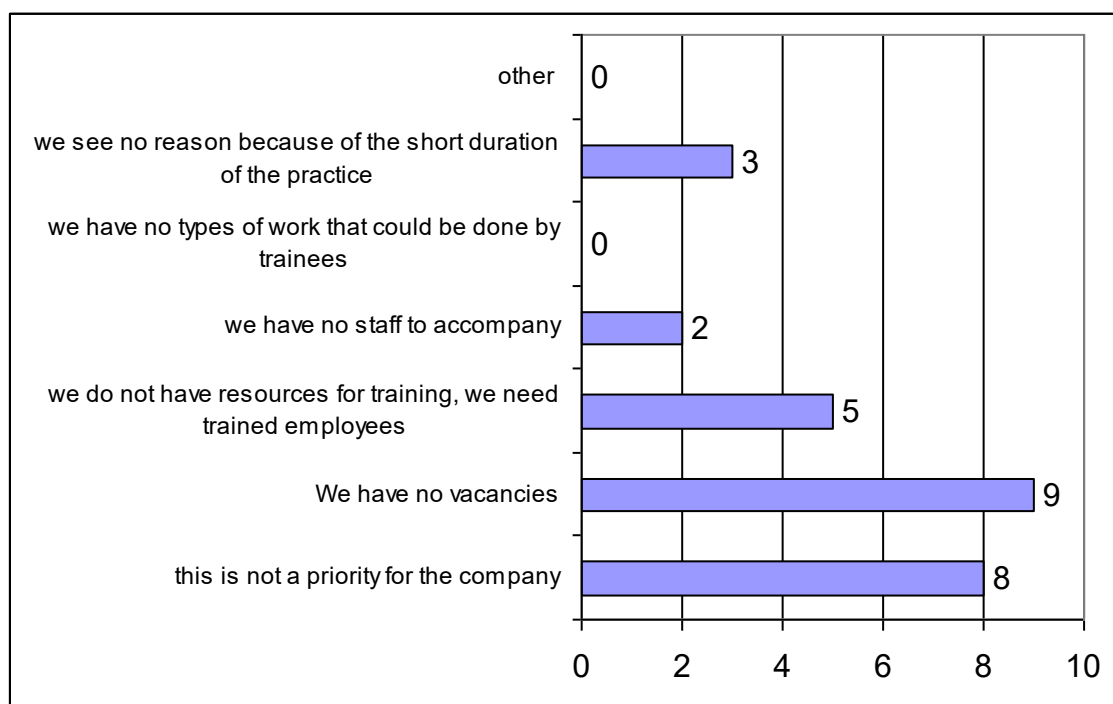


Fig. 17 – Why do companies refuse to accept more students for internship

## CONCLUSION

In the Republic of Belarus mutually beneficial relations between universities and companies have been established at a fairly good level. Students have the opportunity to learn about their future place of work, acquire the necessary practical knowledge and skills. Companies are interested in attracting promising and talented personnel.

However, there are also certain drawbacks in organizing student internships. Not all companies are interested in active work with students, sometimes the internship turns out to be formal and does not bring the desired result to either the student or the company. The insufficient length of internship does not allow students to get to know the workplace well.

For better interaction, it is necessary to build good relations between companies and universities. It would also be ideal to involve representatives of government or local authorities.

Universities can become a platform for discussions and negotiations with companies, students, other stakeholders, receive their feedback, accept and reflect these changes in curricula.

Since it is quite difficult for students to make the transition from learning to professional activity, universities should develop mechanisms and approaches to support students in this process. In particular, the creation of databases of places of practice and employment, career centers, training events, consultations with employers may be useful.

The UniLab project can serve as a good basis for improving connections with employers and increasing student opportunities in the labor market.

