

Olesya Kostylyeva: Is there any life after the university?

The 21st century is not without reason called the “knowledge age”. Knowledge and personal skills became more prevalent because innovative technologies and self-improvement are the only way to achieve self-fulfilling in the world of work. That’s why nowadays it’s necessary to get a high-quality education, where the main attention should be paid to university.

Sociologists consider that education is determined by social mobility of population (it means: the better education you get, the higher social class of the society you can reach). I can’t insist on that all high-school graduates will certainly become rich and influential people. But classical education provided by the well-known university will be your trump card in the world of work. This is only one point in a wide range of advantages which university can supply with you. First of all, it is a perfect opportunity to meet new people sharing your interests. Psychologists state that if you make friends at the university, it is for the whole life. Studying at the university, you improve your personal skills and knowledge: you get invaluable experience of working in team essential for your future job. Finally, it will be possible to travel a lot visiting different conferences and seminars.

I think the university is something like a bridge which connects our childhood with adult independent life. And the stronger and safer this bridge is, the easier and more various your life will be. Alma mater is not a corner stone in our life, but a path to successful future. Like a mythical hero Hercules, who had to pass the tests, we have to solve many problems (for example, for graduates they are no work experience, financial difficulties etc.) and to hold a firm place in this world. That’s why I state that there is life after university but its quality depends on the person, on his willingness, ambitions, personal skills and of course on knowledge.

While studentship seems to be more or less cloudless, the graduates have to overcome some difficulties. The first problem they face is absence of work experience. As this topic aroused high interest in me, I surfed the Internet to find out what requirements job seekers should meet. Having looked through the 20 latest vacancies offered (to get a complete picture of what is offered on the labour market) I realized that only 2 of them don’t require work experience (other 18 vacancies mentioned 2 and more years of professional experience on similar position).

So, the employers aren’t interested in recruitment of young inexperienced staff. But why? Let’s examine this question. On the one hand, graduates are ambitious, full of energy and ideas. Besides, they are ready to study and to take in new information. Sometimes firms and organizations can’t solve some problems, and they have financial sacrifice. Young people are resourceful, can come up with solutions quickly and are a good hand for more experienced employees. For example, my friend with a group of students decided to work out a local program which can help the company “Siemens” to reduce their expenses. They prepared a scheme of the most economical way of delivering goods to point-of-sale terminals and charted everything out. For this performance they got an award from Research & Development Department together with a job offer.

But on the other hand, young people can make mistakes in their business area (because of no work experience), can have problems with workforce etc. My opinion is that everyone can be wrong and you profit by your own mistakes. Guided by cut-and-try method, a new generation of competent and experienced employees will be brought up. When speaking about problems, caused by inexperienced staff, they should be rated according to a scale of weight. As a punishment such sanctions can be applied: light penalty, reproof, fine or even dismissal. It’s up to the company to decide what kind of punishment they would apply.

I think the profit the companies may have recruiting graduates is several times higher than their probable losses. I suggest doing it in such a way: employers work out temporary contracts especially for young people where they mention all the responsibilities to be carried. As a motivation a

competitive salary is paid. Moreover, young employees can be stimulated by bonuses for well-performed work or for achieving success in their job.

But why am I speaking only about companies and their policy? Why haven't I mentioned our main protector – the state? I'll try to make up for a deficiency and to speak about it. Ukraine is following the path of transformation in social life including the field of employment. As I have already said, today everything depends on individual abilities and qualification as compared with our parents' times. The state gave insurance arrangements to its citizens of being employed after graduating from the high-school. This was written in the Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 1977 (Chapter 7: The Basic Rights, Freedoms, and Duties of Citizens of the USSR). That's why people were ensured with stable salary and didn't have to run round like a squirrel in a cage to find a job. As a saying goes: 'Mutantur tempora et nos mutamur in illis - Times vary, and we vary with them'. Life has amended a lot and changed stereotypes. Young people, who were brought up according to material and spiritual values of those times, aren't able to orient themselves in the world where insistency, inquisitiveness and self-reliance are decisive. In this case the state should provide a supportive policy and adaptation programs. I mean seminars, trainings and meetings are to be arranged. As for me, when I visited psychological trainings called "Communication and Personal Development", I noticed that youth declined the old values and was trying to find out the new ones and to train them to perfection. Most of them said that they had done their best to keep up to date and not to be thrown overboard from the ship called "Stable Life".

But let's turn down to the difficulties which can happen with graduates. The second problem is closely connected with the first one. It's their incompetence after leaving the high-school. Very often students get theoretical knowledge but they don't know how to apply it in practice. Moreover, according to the survey of Ukrainian youth 45 per cent of them spoke about the discrepancy to requirements of present time. That's why it's important to find a competitive company for the period of trainings to get invaluable experience. I think every student should use an opportunity to improve his practical skills because "the theory without practice - is dead and fruitless, practice without the theory - is useless and fatal" (Alexander Suvorov).

A good support can provide Skills Centres which are job training facilities. As an employment preparation centre, Skills Centres provide job training in such diverse fields as graphic design, computer repair, dental assisting, optical dispensing, computer software applications, web page design and a host of other sought after skills and training opportunities. Most Skills Centres have classes to help with basic skills development.

I was pleased to see that Ukrainian companies and State institutions had paid attention to this problem and arranged a "Fair of vacancies", where they informed graduates about the company, led interview with the most perspective candidates and provided information about vacancies available. These arrangements help graduates to overcome doubts and successfully to found a job. In such a way comfortable conditions for information interchange between students and companies representatives are created. During dialogue graduates and undergraduates learn about available vacancies, the size of wages, conditions of training, programs of development of young experts in the company. In turn, human resources managers can get acquainted with students, receive their resume or the filled questionnaires.

Moreover, a lot of companies provide a wide range of trainings for students. But to be chosen you have to meet requirements of these companies. Nowadays this list is headed by good knowledge of foreign languages, sociability, ability to learn and self-reliance. It's up to you to improve these skills to be more successful in life, remember that cat in gloves catches no mice.

And finally comes the third problem I would like to speak about. The state committee of statistics estimates that small-scale business and medium business form up to 16 per cent of gross national product in view of shadow economy. The quantity of businessmen (46 out of 1000 Ukrainian

people) corresponds to an average European level. I'd like to mention that only 6 per cent of these entrepreneurs are under 25 years. Today young people are attracted as never before by the idea of starting their own businesses, but the culture of entrepreneurialism in Ukraine isn't as well developed as abroad, it goes about the infrastructure of business mentors, startup support services, and risk financing. About 58 per cent of surveyed young people said that they didn't have enough money to set up in business. And 37 per cent made complaints against a very high rate of tax.

In this case the support of government is the indispensable condition. The policy should be considered and approved by all State institutions. Applying to experience of developed countries I can list their programs of support which can be applied in Ukraine: the financial and consulting help, promotion in getting the governmental orders and the conclusion of contracts with large enterprises, tax and amortization privileges, allocation of grants etc. Moreover, the projects worked out in Europe are issues of current importance for Ukraine. The European Commission is spurring high schools across the 25-nation bloc to offer courses in business, including encouraging students to set up small companies. Initial studies suggest that up to 20% of students enrolled in such courses try to start their own businesses after graduation.

But I think that the tendency of Ukrainian youth to start their own business lets us hope for the better. Their passion to succeed overcomes the barriers and entrepreneurialism knows no borders. I'm sure that very soon Ukraine will be able to get over financial and social difficulties and to get influx of foreign investments. A great number of companies is interested in accordance of financial help to Ukrainian entrepreneurs because of job-creating capacity of start-up businesses.

In four years I will graduate from the university. May be, on a global scale these four years won't change a lot, but they are crucial for my future career. I have made clear for myself what way I should go to occupy a highly important place in our society. To be mentioned that education is high on the list of preferences of career-oriented people. Higher education is very important to national economies, both as a significant industry in its own right, and as a source of trained and educated personnel for the rest of the economy. High school opens the gates to numerous opportunities of self-improvement, perfection and communication.

It's never too early to think either about life after university or about earning for life in student times. Turning over in my mind the things should be done to have every prospect of success in job I realized fully an important role of work experience in our life. I decided not to wait till graduating from the university but start working as soon as possible. I'm sure that companies are interested in recruiting young people because it can bring them profit and solution to many problems. Using efficiently the methods of conviction and compulsion the companies can regulate the means of achieving success. Moreover, work experience will help me to orient myself in our quickly changing world where teamwork is deeply intertwined with personal challenge. I think that knowledge applied in practice becomes in double measure useful. You should only keep your eyes open and not to miss the opportunity which fortune sends to us.

Planning my future I don't exclude the possibility of starting my own business. It will ensure personal independence, self-relief and making well-considered decisions. Besides, it's the way to unite different threads in my life. Initial capital for start-up could be either earned during working for a company or a short-term credit, provided by the bank. Efficient credit policy of the government exerts influence on establishment of new enterprises that stimulate the growth of national income. Privileges in paying duty will be a good incentive scheme for entrepreneurs. The variety of ideas which can be set up in life and bring the common good, the energy and excitement of young people directed in the right course and potential increase of state treasury – aren't these arguments carrying enough conviction to provide a purposeful supporting policy?

But it's important to remember that today's society needs active, sociable and competent people. Those, who want to be successful, have to follow and to update the information. The proverb "Who

possesses the information can control the world” has become the issue of the day. The only overcoming of listed problems isn't a quality pass to a quality life, but an efficient training for future. I think the motto “Perfice te!” (Improve yourself) I've chosen for myself will be a guiding thread in the world of education and work.

In conclusion I would like to say: Non scholae, vitae discimus – we are learning not for school but for life, which in no circumstances finishes beyond the university.