

## Victoria Popovych: Is Ukrainian Education in a Danger?

There are people in our life, to whom we must say «thank you» million times, and it will not be enough to express fully our gratitude and appreciation. For me teachers are just these people. Exactly at school the character of person is formed, he becomes a personality. Remember, at elementary school we were taught that teachers are our second mothers. I am sure nobody understood that quite well, then as wisdom is said to come with ages. Now I do comprehend this saying. It was teachers, who taught me many things in life, who shared their experience with me, who gave me advice, who helped me to make my choice. I made it. And here I am, in the Donetsk National University, which is considered to be one of the best in Ukraine. I am a third-year student of the accountant-financial department and my major is «applied statistics». Am I satisfied with this? On the whole, I think, yes. Why I have chosen exactly this university? Because it is prestigious, the quality of education conforms to my aspirations. So, which components of my «education» idea became a driving force for me?

For me the most important things are:

1. Well-qualified academic staff. Instructors also have to pertain good leadership skills, as they indeed give and process material with students, create an atmosphere in a group.
2. Professor's attitude towards a student. One must not discriminate a person on color of skin, on sex, age, etc. For instance, if the quantity of boys exceeds the quantity of girls in a group, the majority of professors (I mean female sex), treat them more loyally, saying that here are less the boys in the group, we should take care of them.
3. Students' educational level. It is very important for a professor, what kind of group he works with and what he needs to orientate himself on. For example, our teachers say that the fourth-year students of our specialty are very slow-witted. They do not attend scientific conferences, their progress is below to middle, they practically do not participate in student arrangements, it is very difficult to work with them. They call it «a special group». Naturally, it will be not very pleasant for academic to be occupied with such students. And the result, therefore, will leave much to be desired.
4. Standards of education. It includes methods, demands to the education, system of education.

All these components are closely associated. If a gap appears in one of them, it also appears in the others.

When I came to a university and saw the group, I understood that I was lucky. We formed a very friendly team, and it is factor of no small importance while studying. The majority tries to get «4» and «5», we have competition, and it is great: there is a stimulus to study and self-perfection. Instructors always say that it is easy to work with our group. Although I noticed that students, studying on the budgetary form of education, try to study more than those on commercial basis. I do not know what it is concerned with. Possibly, that the latter know that parents will help them financially to pass an exam. Though it is a pity to speak about it, but in our country corruption is developed, and it is not difficult to pay for an examination. I can not but mark that the full-time education noticeably differs from a correspondence one. On the full-time department the students are given more time to master the material, they have more opportunity to consult with a professor on this or that question, which one can not say about external students. Besides, external students more frequently combine studies with work, in other words it leaves much less time for studies. Hence, most of them do not revise for their exams properly, hoping that they either will be able to copy or to give a bribe to a professor. And if a student-external graduates from university, his diploma will be just a piece of paper, which is not confirmed by knowledge.

The chief thing in a professor is knowledge of his business. I consider that in our university the

proportion of «good» and «bad» (if it is possible to put into these words) academics is 80 to 20. By a «good» is implied a professor, possessing such characteristics:

1. He has an experience: this instructor is able to «grab» an audience, he has a certain store of knowledge, etc. He can answer almost any question regarding his discipline; he is able to socialize with students as equals.
2. It is even better, if a professor can not only answer questions in relation to his discipline, but besides this, he has a broad mind. It is always pleasant to communicate with an erudite person, as on his lectures it is possible not only to study his discipline, but also to get some interesting information referring to other subjects.
3. Skills to perform good, easily understandable presentation. It is occurred that a student simply fears to go to the class, as a professor either is very strict, or presented a material beyond comprehension. A student misses studies because he is afraid of getting bad mark, he does think that exactly he will be questioned.
4. Capability to rouse students' interest. It happens that an instructor is erudite, he has an experience, but it is impossible to sit on his classes, as in a strict sense after half an hour students are sleepy. Why? One of the reasons to this is a monotonous speech. Psychologists affirm that it is no way of being fully concentrated during all the lecture. It must be related to the life, to what interests a student in his everyday activity.
5. Sense of humor. It is only natural that a professor who possesses a sense of humour can make his class the most visited one and beloved. With such instructor even the most boring subject becomes interesting.
6. Of course, an adequate evaluation. My friend had a case, when she received «2» for mispronunciation of the French word, although there is no transcription in the French dictionary. After this incident she had to complain in dean's office. After a good dressing-down a professor became as a silk. But could he consider the situation from the very beginning in order not to resort to the extreme measures?

I understand that everybody is individual. But, if on a professor, though even hardly at all, depends the fate of people, one need to behave to this high status properly.

For me, a feeling of student's life is also an essential part in a university. Besides studies, our university offers participation in different kinds of sports (for example, I am a captain of the combined team of my department on basket-ball), hobby groups, conducting of sports days, contest, which the awards are given for, organization of journeys to the Ukraine cities and abroad. Furthermore every summer a trip to the sport camp, belonging to our university, is arranged. However, there is one «but». I entered the university just when Ukraine turned to the Bologna system of education, our group was experimental.

Ukraine joined the Bologna process on May, 19th, 2005. What is the Bologna system? One can write about it at length. I will tell about it in brief. A "Bologna process" got its name on June, 19th, 1999 after signing by ministers of 29 European countries, who are accountable for education, the Bologna Declaration about creation of a unified European space of higher education. Countries join Bologna Declaration on a voluntarily basis. The required parameters of the Bologna process are: three-level system of higher education, academic credits ECTS, an academic mobility of students, professors and administrative personnel of institutes of higher education, European enclosure to the diploma, quality control of higher education, creation of united European research space. On June, 19th, 1999 education ministers of 29 European countries signed Bologna declaration, the main purpose of which was the creation of The European Higher Education Area until 2010 year, in which professors and students will be able to shift without difficulty, and their qualifications will be acknowledged.

So, the standards of education have been changing every year, therefore it is difficult to adapt

yourself to the educational process. Spare time is becoming progressively smaller for training, rest and entertainments. In order not to be in the number of backward students, I have to spend a plenty of time sitting with the textbooks, because the main part of material is assigned for the independent study. I understand that the quantity of trauancies in the university decreases, but nervousness and tiredness increases as well.

But, moreover, we have to slave under each instructor individually, that is everybody sets the system of evaluation of students' knowledge, there are no unique standards (you can't but agree that it is not very comfortable). It is known, that at the given system of education during an academic term students must pass the module control, fulfill the individual tasks and essays; their knowledge must be evaluated using a 100-pointed scale and, if a student gets 50 points and he is satisfied with this mark, generally he can be not examined. If a grade does not satisfy a student, all marks, which were gotten during a term-time, are cancelled, and he gets his 100 points again at the exam. The reality of teaching in our university is: a student during a half-year gets maximum 50 points (that corresponds to the grade «3»), and a student must earn remaining 50 marks at an examination. Thus, if a student gets 39 marks during a term, he will not get «5» on examination in any case, even if his knowledge corresponds to maximally possible mark.

In addition, the Bologne system is intended for the independent students' work. A professor is not a lecturer, but a consultant. It is well on the one hand: this system foresees an interactive education, at the class a student speaks more, than an academic. Thought and logic are developing; a student himself, due to the leading questions of professor, can make conclusions. A material is learned better, if a student tries to find an answer for the put up question (for example, to find information in textbooks). However, according to the dean of our university, none of the Institutes of Ukraine have enough textbooks. The computer providing also suffers from deficiency. To the point there will be made a comparison: in the best western Institutes of higher education one student is supplied with three computers, and in Ukraine it is not always possible to provide each student even with one. Moreover, access to the Internet for Ukrainian student is payed.

In spite of the fact that the level of the Ukrainian educational system does not correspond to western one completely, after introduction of the Bologne system another problem appeared: conditions of entrance to the master's degree. Recently a student was enlisted into the 5th year of studying automatically, taking into consideration his progress and wishes. Now a student, who is taught at an institute of higher education, where an educational process lasts 5 or more years, completing the fourth year is automatically sent down from an institute of higher education with the diploma of bachelor, and in order to continue education after finishing a fourth year to complete a master's degree he is obliged to pass new entrance examinations. And there can pretend both students, studying on the budgetary form of education, and one on commercial basis, and external students, and students of other institutes of higher education. That is, a student, who has been studying at the institute for 4 years, may not be able to enter the fifth year owing to some circumstances, not act on a 5th year and to lose an opportunity to continue education. A bachelor's degree is an all-sufficient higher education of the first level. However, if a student succeeds to graduate with the master's degree, he has a possibility to graduate the third level of higher education - doctoral degree. I am not satisfied with such situation in our country. The Soviet system was considered to be one of the best in the world. Students were studying for 5 years, whereupon they were given an only diploma of «specialist». Now we are given two. What for? Is it possible for a «bachelor» to become a «master» in 1 year? At the same time the program of education does not change at all. When transferring to such system it was reasonably to change the program of education fundamentally.

Everybody knows a proverb: «from examinations to examinations students live cheerfully, and examinations happen only twice a year». At least, it was earlier. So our parents told us. What do we see now? I consider that the system of higher education in Ukraine is not ready for being transferred to the Bologne system. Moreover, Europe must not create a unique institution of the quality control,

which would provide the observance of certain totality of criteria. Ranging and uniformity of procedures is neither desirable, nor necessary. What promises the adaptation of the given process in Ukraine, and whether it will give rise to a greater crisis in the system of education?

If I could perfect things in our university because of which our students might feel uncomfortable, I would amend to an educational process:

1. If we joined the Bologna process, which is more foreseen for an independent work of student, I would provide students with lectures in an electronic variant. It would be very comfortable: students, having familiarized themselves with a subject at a home, would come to studies and ask questions on the given material, if something was unclear.

2. Would enter, as the Bologna system requires, a condition, under which a student would earn 100 points during a term, and if a grade dissatisfies him, he would have an opportunity to gather 100 points on an exam anew.

3. Would abolish entrance examinations to master's degree: there is no need in it at all.

4. I would try to change it in such a way that lectures and practical courses were conducted by the same professor. My group faced such a problem, when the material on the lectures completely differs from that on the practical courses. For example, solving a problem using the out-of-date formulas. At the end while passing a test you get a task you can not solve.