

Oksana Udovyk: Is there any life after university for the scientist?

Introduction

More and more people are having trouble when first looking for work. Nearly 20% of the young Europeans are currently out of work. Even well qualified young people need more time to find a secure job that can give them financial and social independence. The rate of youth unemployment is much higher than that of adults in most countries of the world; recent study suggest that at least 60 million young people are without a job and that youth unemployment rates are, on average, three times as high as those for the adults. In developing countries, open youth unemployment is compounded by substantial levels of underemployment and poor – quality jobs in the informal sector. Both these phenomena are widespread.

In Ukraine, 11,1 million people are under 35 years old. The level of unemployment among youth is 13,4% while the national unemployment rate averages 9,1%; 40% of the unemployed youth have followed higher education. These data seem to be oppressive. The causes of youth unemployment can be analyzed in different ways. I am going to analyze the causes of the youth scientist unemployment. I will try to answer the question about the future of a young scientist in Ukraine in a “views on the problem from within” manner. I was graduated from one of the best university in Ukraine. But I am unemployed as well as my university-mates. I will try to answer the question about our future, basing on my personal experience, experience of my friends and literature data.

Highlanders Story

Many of us have already confronted the difficulties after graduation from the university; some of us haven't yet but certainly will while the „only one is left”. It sounds like an out-of-date phrase from the famous film about a strange highlander, who was striving after the same strangers and cutting their heads, accompanied by Queen's music. Unfortunately, we have many in common with this highlander Duncan. Not many of us will remain in the scientific family; the only one “Duncan” will be left in the Ukrainian science. This was famous university joke. But current situation shows that this joke is becoming truth.

“- Is there any scientific life after university for you in Ukraine?”, -I asked my friends.

“No, certainly”,-was the answer. Why don't you want to be a scientist? Why then did you apply to become a biology student or chemistry one? Such a simple question, isn't it? But it causes an “em... and mu...” answer only. However, after a few minutes' mooing, it is possible to hear something like: “This is not prestigious or it is not high-paid”. Indeed, many of us think so. But let us search deep inside the root of the problem. Actually, majority will say that the neglect to the science profession was entailed by quite different reasons. After an hour of reflection the answer was: “We cannot find the right answer or right words to complete the answer, but certainly we applied not only for a high-paid or prestigious job”. Then let us reflect about these different reasons.

Reflection

I remember how proud of having a student-biologist (chemist, physicist) we were. Well-dressed, well-mannered and inspired we were standing on September 1. Exited to study, fervent to “make a difference” in our state, to do something outstanding and life-important, become a Nobel Laureate or save mankind, we were proud to become a REAL SCIENTIST.

To the end of the 4th course only 15 of 25 students were left. Why? Now I have understood that the main reason was our disappointment, the disappointment at our educational system. First it is disappointment at teacher's methods and technologies. Then it is disappointment that a diploma in your field cannot secure you a good job.

I believe that there are possibilities to improve the exist situation. I think that teachers should not necessarily be professors but they certainly should know how to teach and how to encourage learning. I am sure, that knowledge can be acquired in the process of work and from books. But universities still have to teach you how to do this and encourage you to do this. It is very important to organize special training for teachers to improve their “coaching” skills. They should be taught about non-formal education and new stream in teacher methods.

Then, I think that the guide- institution should be founded in universities. I believe that creation of the guide - institution would help to support the competitive position of young people entering the labor market, providing them with better skills. This mechanism should not only secure a future job, thought university – employee agreement but also help students to acquire needful skills thought training programmes and help students to obtain first job experience thought internship programmes. The universities should take care much more about its graduates. In our “young researchers” case the agreements among university and Academy of Science’s Institutes or Commercial Research Firms should exist.

The last stroke or Ukrainian Academy of Sciences

Let us go back to the blockbuster about highlander Duncan. Nothing can kill him, nor bullets, no wounds, except... except the last stroke that is cutting his head.

After finishing studying without light in your eyes, but yet with hope you are searching for happiness in one of the scientific institutes of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. Everyone will meet you with pleasure and will encourage your desire to be included into the research family. Sorry, it is one more joke. It would be perfect if somebody notice your presence. Then you will sit at old desk, doing nothing but watching old ladies drinking tea or coffee. This will happen as a result of absence of any agreements between your university and the Academy of Science’s Institute. Nobody pay these ladies for helping you. But what should you do if you came for the probation period without any work and practical experience? What should you do if you want to do soothing but don’t know how? What should you do if you want to be a researcher in Ukraine but there is no opportunity for you to stay in this Academician Institute? Of course if you are lucky, someone may decide with a great unwillingness to share his or her not necessarily valuable experience and knowledge with you. But If you are not, you will continue watching old ladies drinking tea or coffee.

The National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine includes 174 institutes. The academy employs 45,000 permanent staff in the network of largely unproductive research establishments. This powerful academy, a relic of the Soviet science complex, dominates over the Ukrainian science. The average age of the academicians is about 71; the president, Boris Paton, an expert in electric welding and the son of the former president, is 85 .

It is clear to me that there are no places for those young Ukrainians who are currently in search of a productive scientific career, as long as the old guard is keeping all the key positions. And the academy cannot repair itself, as long as they are keeping the key positions.

Nowadays the research institutes are in the worst condition. Almost everywhere I see a sad picture: old and cold apartments, fleeced walls and absence of modern equipment. Then, there are also claims of widespread corruption. For example, an attempt to create closer ties between Ukraine and western European institutions by linking Ukraine to GÉANT, the high-speed European data communication network, was allegedly hindered by academy members demanding bribes. Another complaint is that the academy leaders, fearing competition and loss of influence, are blocking attempts to facilitate Ukraine's participation in research programmes funded by the European Union (EU), by deliberately holding back information and generally failing to cooperate with EU authorities 4.

So the Ukraine’s archaic research system needs reformation. Thais is not only about the age of the employees, not about unwillingness of “old guards” to share their thrones and even not about low-

productivity, the absence of development direction and corruption, this is about fundamental reformation. What I see is the presence of universities with many young, well-educated and highly motivated young scientist and the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, which control critical aspects of Ukraine's scientific life, being very unproductive structure. I am sure that the reorganization of scientific institutes to universities is the most successful way of dealing with the problems. I am not talking about destruction of all Academic Institutions. Of course some of them have to be "alive". But research that is conducted in these Institutions has to be determined by the government as priority. Only in this case the government should finance their existence. I think that this reorganization not only reduce expenditure of government's money but also soften the "guide" tasks for universities, rise number of scientific working places in universities and heighten the quality of education in universities.

But "The Academy is not interested in any reform whatsoever," says Aleksei Boyarski, a theoretical physicist at CERN, the European lab for particle physics in Geneva, Switzerland. "Nothing will change in Ukrainian science as long as this system exists. I can only add that the Academy is not interested in any reform as well our government hasn't intention to spend money for this reorganization. But if the situation remains the same our country will lose not only money, spent for unproductive Academic System but well-educated and highly motivated young scientist.

My friend, who decided to work in a commercial firm instead of NAS, once said "I have a good job: it is well-paid. Sounds strange for a scientist, doest it?" Another friend of mine, who cannot find work in NAS, is searching for husband from USA via Internet. Some of us work at Research Institute in NAS, receiving almost nothing. Some of us have left the idea of finding a job in the Ukrainian scientific system and immigrated.

So the answer to the question if there is any life after university for the scientist is there is "no" at least in these times in Ukraine. Sometimes I think about the reason of all these things and the silly answer arise in my head. All this has happened because "the only one should be left". Oddly enough, but this selective machine works. And will work until the reformation of research and educational system in Ukraine will happed.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the paper, the idea was posed that "the only one young scientist will be left in Ukraine" in the nearest future. During reflection I have found out that this will happend not because of unpopularity of the profesion or the low level of salary but because of the disappointment in educational and scientific system in Ukraine.

We can see from the evidence presented, that untill the educational and scientific systems are interested in any reform, there will not be any life after university for a young scientist in Ukraine. The paper proposes improve the educational system by creation of the guide – institution, which would help to support the competitive position of young people entering the labor market, providing them with better skills and providing "coaching" training for teachers.

Then the author proposes the reorganization of the NAS to university, as the most successful way of dealing with the existed problems. this reorganization not only reduce expenditure of government's money but also soften the "guide" tasks for universities, rise number of scientific working places in universities and heighten the quality of education in universities.