

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN UKRAINE

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Over the past decades, Ukraine as well as other European countries has seen a disconnect between its education system and the labour market. Among the main reasons are: orientation of vocational and higher education curricula towards the demand and preferences of school graduates rather than economic trends and forecasts; absence of career counselling; and low level of cooperation between businesses and universities.

For young people in Ukraine higher education diploma is perceived as leading to better employment prospects. According to the survey *Socio-economic portrait of students* [2016], 50% of Ukrainian youth choose the higher education route because they hope to obtain knowledge and skills required for the world of work; 16% of young people choose university following their parents and friends' advice, and many are attracted by the cost of education and opportunities to get state-funded education.

The amount of young people who pursue technical and vocational education in Ukraine is relatively low. The *School-to-work-transition survey* conducted by the International Labour Organization in Ukraine in 2013 found that main reasons were the perception that the ideal job for a young specialist is non-technical and that non-technical jobs have a higher status; a perceived bad reputation of vocational training; and family's disapproval of young people following the vocational route.

The most popular specializations among those who choose a higher education path include economy and business, law and humanities (14%, 8% and 5.7% of students have chosen them respectively in the 2015/2016 academic year). The survey *Socio-economic portrait of students* [2016] demonstrates that students select their specialization according to their preferences. It is indicated that 50% of students choose their specialization based on their interest in a subject, while almost a third of them (29%) take into account the prestige of the profession, job opportunities and salary prospects.

In 2015, 62% of students were enrolled in state-funded education and 38% were paying tuition fees. The distribution of specialisations that young people choose has remained unchanged in recent years. Disciplines popular among full-time students include engineering (34%), social sciences (19%) and humanities (12%). Part-time students choose to study social sciences (35%), engineering (20%), humanities (12%) and pedagogy (12%).

Interestingly, studies attest to a lack of understanding among young people of the importance of continual professional development. According to the survey *Youth of Ukraine - 2015* [2016], 21% of young people did not undergo any professional training and 24% do not have any plans to improve their skills.

In recent years, a number of initiatives focussing on skills development, detailed forecasting of skills needs and methods of their teaching have been launched in Ukraine. These initiatives have mostly been implemented by private companies (e.g. SCM, EY, Nestle), international organisations (e.g. British Council, World Bank) or public bodies (e.g. Public University, Singularity University, Leadership Academy, CSR Ukraine Educational Program etc.). However, such projects are still relatively rare and unique. Generally, young professionals acquire work skills when they are already in employment, often with the help of managers and colleagues or through different corporate trainings. Popular forms of corporate education include training sessions, corporate academies, coaching and other forms of work with young employees. Some programs focus on workplace adaptation for

young specialists. Employability skills are also taught at business schools and through international programs.

Over the past four years, CSR Ukraine, a non-governmental organisation, has organised a Business-University forum as a platform for encouraging dialogue and cooperation between businesses and universities. Other projects implemented by CSR Ukraine include STEM and STEM-for-girls projects, Business-University Laboratory and CEO-Rectors strategic dialogues. A number of research projects have also been undertaken, including this year's Skills for Ukrainian Business-2030. This research found that among the skills Ukrainian employers are looking for in employees are:

- teamwork,
- communication,
- problem solving,
- analytical thinking,
- ability to learn quickly,
- adaptability/ flexibility,
- responsibility,
- being proactive,
- strong writing skills
- emotional intelligence.

According to Ukrainian employers, today's young people are sociable, able to work in a team, able to learn quickly and are adaptable. Among the skills that university graduates found they were lacking when entering the labour market are communication skills, ability to reflect and make decisions, IT skills, conflict management, ability to work under stress and perform administrative tasks.

Based on these research findings, CSR Ukraine plans to focus their activities on introduction of a skills agenda in schools and universities in the period from 2016 to 2018.