

PROJECT AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

УПРАВЛІННЯ ПРОЕКТАМИ І ПРОГРАМАМИ

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PROFESSIONAL CAREER READINESS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN UKRAINE

О.Л. Павлов, В.С. Трофімов. Професійна кар'єрна готовність студентів вищих навчальних закладів в Україні. В процесі якісної підготовки фахівців з вищою освітою важливе місце займає забезпечення безперешкодного переходу випускника вишу на робоче місце. В умовах ринку праці і конкуренції це є непростим завданням, що вимагає від студента відповідних знань і навичок. Допомогу у вирішенні цього завдання покликані надавати служби кар'єри університету. Для підвищення їх ефективності важливо розуміти, що є кінцевим результатом роботи таких служб і як його досягти. У міжнародній практиці для цього використовується концепція кар'єрної готовності студента. В Україні, на жаль, даний підхід ще не знайшов практичного застосування. У зв'язку з цим мета роботи – сформулювати поняття кар'єрної готовності для студентів вітчизняних вищих навчальних закладів з урахуванням особливостей нашої системи освіти, а також розробити дорожню карту досягнення такої готовності – кар'єрну карту студента. В роботі проаналізована діяльність кар'єра-центрів українських і американських університетів, проведено опитування студентів різних спеціальностей і року навчання, запропоновано перелік компетенції, якими повинен володіти випускник вищого навчального закладу, готовий до працевлаштування в конкурентних умовах ринку праці. Розглянуто основні етапи досягнення кар'єрної готовності студента у вигляді дорожньої карти, та ресурси, які потрібні для її реалізації. Впровадження даного підходу дозволить систематизувати роботу університетських підрозділів сприяння в працевлаштуванні студентів і підвищити їх ефективність. У свою чергу, поліпшення роботи студентських служб кар'єри буде спрямовано на подальше підвищення якості професійної підготовки молодих фахівців з вищою освітою, і полегшить їх адаптацію до ринку праці.

Ключові слова: студентські служби кар'єри, професійна кар'єрна готовність, вища освіта, працевлаштування випускників, ринок праці, кар'єрна карта для студентів

O. Pavlov, V. Trofimov. Professional career readiness of university students in Ukraine. In the process of high-quality training of specialists with higher education, an important part is to ensure a smooth transition of the university graduate to the workplace. In the conditions of the labor market and competition, it is not an easy task, requiring the student to have the appropriate knowledge and skills. Assistance in this task should be provided by university career services. To increase their efficiency, it is important to understand what the final result of such services performance is and how to achieve it. In international practice, this is the conception of student career readiness. In Ukraine, unfortunately, this approach has not yet found practical application. In this regard, the purpose of the work is to formulate the concept of career readiness for students of domestic universities, taking into account the features of our education system, as well as to develop a roadmap for achieving such readiness – a student career map. The work analyzes the activity of career centers of Ukrainian and American universities, a survey of students of different specialties and years of study is conducted, and a list of competencies of an university graduate ready to work in competitive conditions of the labor market, is suggested. The main stages of achievement of such a student's career readiness in the form of a roadmap are considered, as well as resources necessary for its realization. The introduction of this approach will allow systematizing the activity and improve the efficiency of university career services to assist in the placement of students. Consequently, enhancement of student career services performance will lead to further improving the quality of professional training of young specialists with higher education, and will facilitate their adaptation to the labor market.

Keywords: student career services, professional career readiness, higher education, employment of graduates, job market, career map for students

Introduction. Career readiness is one of important competences which a student should get during his/her study at the university. It means ability of the student to make self-assessment and set professional goals, to understand a process of employment at labor market or evaluate options for continuing education, to use all possible resources for getting a job and have skills to represent himself as a professional. In fact, all advanced universities in the world have highly developed career services to provide career readiness of their students. In Ukraine such services have very short history and are still immature. At the same time, the job market requires trained specialists who are able to successfully pass the selection in the face of tough competition. This is why this work is intended to formulate ca-

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reer readiness concept for domestic students taking into account special features of Ukrainian higher education system, and to develop a career map for students to get this readiness.

Analysis of recent publications and current state of the problem. One of the key indicators of the university efficiency is the number of employed graduates and the quality of their jobs. However, getting degree does not guarantee getting a job, this is why student career services are very important part of each advanced university in Europe and the USA [1 – 3]. But Ukraine is a young state, only decades separate it from the model where job placement of graduates was made under the central plan only, and the labor market as well as the spirit of competition was absent at all. Only after getting independence of the country, at Ukrainian universities it began to appear the Western-oriented career centers [4, 5].

Now every our Higher Education institution has a unit which helps students in internship and/or employment [5 – 9]. Nevertheless, the number of really effective working career services in Ukraine is still very low. Among the reasons of such situation are the following:

- staff members of career services do not have special knowledge and skills in this area. Often these duties are implemented by people from traditional university departments working the same way as they did when it was no job market;

- typically there are very limited funds (or even no funds) for this service in the university budget;

- Ukrainian educational institutions now focus on curriculum and research reforms primarily. But the student career services often become the low priority issue.

This list can be continued, but we suggest the main reason is the lack of a systematic approach to solving this problem. Most of our existing career centers focus on some important, but partial options, like vacancy information, resume/interview skills, job fairs, training courses about employment, etc. But it is necessary to understand what should be the final overall result of career service activity, its output. Obviously it is student career readiness [10]. Without this, a comprehensive transfer of a student from the university to a workplace and his/her further professional development is impossible. This problem will be particularly enhanced with the further development of the economy in our country and the corresponding increase in the need for highly qualified personnel.

The purpose and objectives of the study. In this regard, the goal of the article is to consider the concept of career readiness for national university graduates and propose the ways to achieve this readiness in the form of a student career map.

Research data, interpretation of results and discussion. The study is based on the analysis of experience of Ukrainian career center at Odessa National Polytechnic University (ONPU) [4, 6] and American career centers at universities in Syracuse [3] and Maryland [11]. While participating in daily activities of these centers, structure and functions of career services were studied, their staff members, as well as students and employers were interviewed, respective conferences, summits and other career events were attended.

The analysis led to the conclusion that the basics of the American approach to the students' career readiness in our universities can be applied, but with due regard for the peculiarities of national higher education. As a result, the concept of career readiness and ways to achieve it were formulated, which will be discussed further.

For a more visual presentation of certain parts of the analysis, survey results were also used which was conducted by the authors last year. There were 100 ONPU students of 6 technical majors interviewed, from first to fifth year of full-time study. This small sample was intended to demonstrate a general approach. Of course, it would also be of interest to conduct a survey with an increased number of participants and an extended list of questions, to study the impact on the student career readiness of a year of study, differences in specialties, and other issues, as well as comparing such results with known data [9]. However, this is beyond the scope of this article.

The main points the survey illustrated were: student self-assessment for professional choice, career planning and getting work experience, job search skills, and academic ethics requirements. Below are diagrams where students' answers are represented respectively.

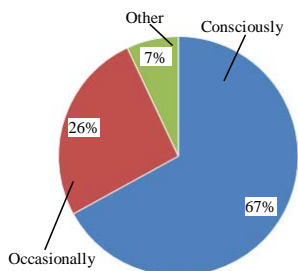


Fig. 1. How did you choose major when you applied to the university?

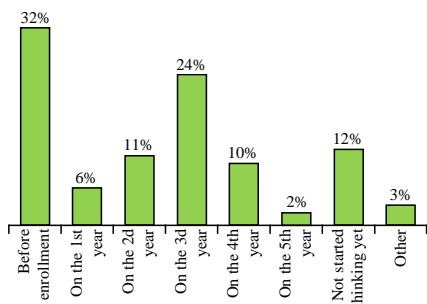


Fig. 2. When did you first think about the future employment after graduation?

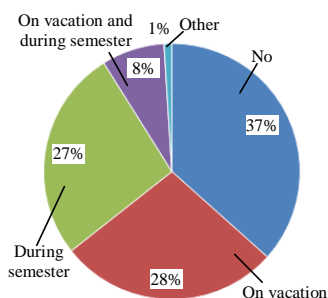


Fig. 3. Have you got experience during the university study?

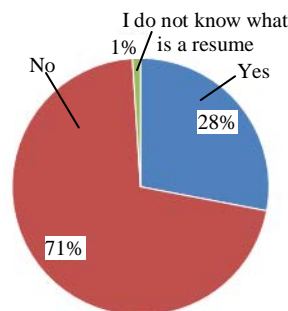


Fig. 5. Do you have written your professional resume?

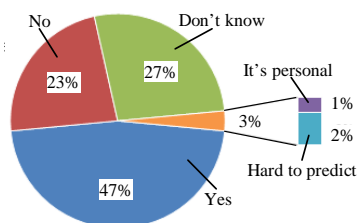


Fig. 4. Do you have an idea how to plan your future professional career just now?

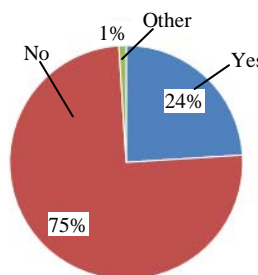


Fig. 6. Did you use your resume for employment?

The first question was about career field choice. Most students chose the profession consciously, but about a quarter of them – by accident (Fig. 1). In the category “Other”, in particular, the following answers came up: advised by friends (relatives) who have the same profession or chose option with less tuition.

Almost a third of respondents for the first time began to think about their future employment even before they entered the university. More than 50 percent were determined during the study process. At the time of the survey, 12 % did not yet think about the work. Finally, 3 % of students tried to escape from the answer for one reason or another (Fig. 2).

Getting first real work experience is very important issue for students. A common practice in Ukraine now is the combination of students' study and work, which turned out to be 63 %. Most of this happens during vacation between semesters (Fig. 3).

Half of the students surveyed (23 % + 27 %) have no idea of how they need to plan their careers just now (Fig. 4). Another 3 % simply evaded the answer.

Despite the fact that almost all students are aware of the purpose of professional resume, three-quarters of them do not have or never applied their resume when they are employed (Fig. 5 and 6).

The job interview option is not much better (Fig. 7). The more paradoxical is that there is a stable share of 15...17 % of students who do not want to learn the basics of job search technology (Fig. 8).

As a result, currently the majority of the students surveyed (about 80 %) cannot name their future job placement even approximately (Fig. 9).

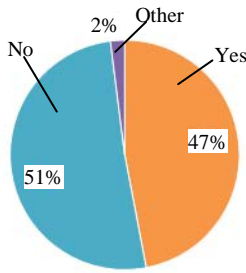


Fig. 7. Have you been interviewed for employment?

Would you like to learn how to write a resume correctly	Would you like to learn how to be interviewed for employment successfully
• Yes – 78 %	• Yes – 82 %
• No – 17 %	• No – 15 %
• Other – 5 %	• Other – 3 %

Fig. 8. Desire to learn the elements of job search technology

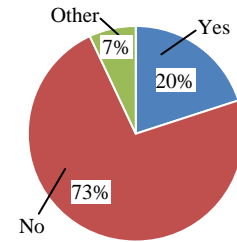


Fig. 9. Do you know the place of your future job at this moment?

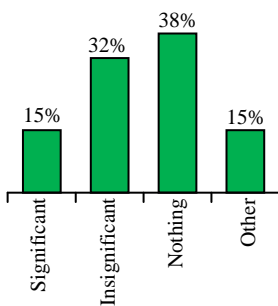


Fig. 10. How the university helps students for their employment

It is interesting, how students themselves evaluate the reasons of such a bad situation. In Fig. 10 we can see that 70 % of students suggest that the university does not help enough in their employment. The category “Other” here includes answers like “I have not asked for help yet”, “I do not know”, “No comments”. This shows that many students still believe the first job must be provided for them by university, government or other institutions, but do not understand their own role in the career development process and do not know about the resources that the university provides them.

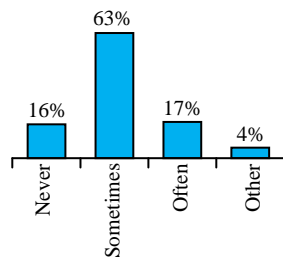


Fig. 11. Have you ever used in your work (papers, essays, quizzes etc.) materials, taken from the Internet or from other students without references?

Another problem which influences national educational system, including student employment, is academic cheating, and in particular – plagiarism. About 80 % of students practice this, although most of them do it “occasionally” and “partially” (Fig. 11 and 12). Unfortunately, half of those surveyed students consider this a minor violation, 17 % did not even think about it, and 18 % did it consciously to get higher scores (Fig. 13). It is obvious that the related efforts that are being made now at the level of the Ministry of Education and at the level of each university should be significantly strengthened.

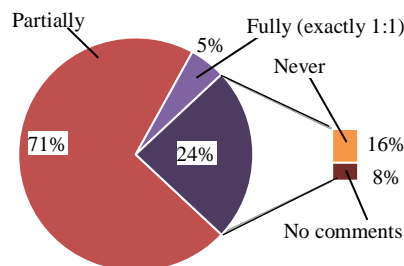


Fig. 12. If yes, what was the amount of borrowing?

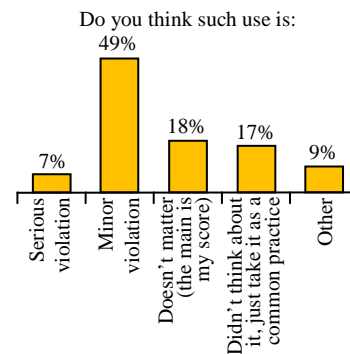


Fig. 13. How students evaluate their plagiarism

Finally, we can say that the results of the survey (Fig. 1 – 13) are in good agreement with the main findings of the research:

- the problem of student career development is actual for domestic universities;
- most of students are not aware about career planning and placement process, correlation between this process and curriculum, available resources and requirements for getting a job.

To solve the problem, the efficiency of career services should be increased, including the use of the concept of student career readiness.

Student career readiness. To provide a smooth transfer from the university to a job place, a student should have the set of specific knowledge and skills [3, 10, 11]. It means that the student who is career ready:

- knows own interests and skills appropriate to a career field;
- understands the basic career development process;
- has motivation for comprehensive study following the academic rules (no plagiarism, etc);
- uses all available resources for career exploration and job search;
- can formulate own ability to be a specialist at work;
- got acquainted in practice with the future professional activity;
- is able to actively pursue own career goals.

To get career readiness, a student should interact with the faculty academic advisor and Career center staff. The work that needs to be done can be divided into several stages that form a career map. Table shows possible career map for bachelor students. Of course, content of stages is dynamic and can be changed or moved. The list of tools is approximate and may be modified as well. The table also does not discuss the results of each stage, like when the first basic resume should be done or job search strategy articulated and so on. These and other details should be implemented at the moment when the personal student career map is being developed.

Example of career map for bachelor students

Stage	Content	Tools	Period of study
Preparatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self Assessment • Learning the Employment Process • Career Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test of personal type, skills, interests, values, goals, etc. • Training courses, workshops, mock interviews, etc. • Advising 	1 st year
Main	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using Resources (<i>to explore possible career paths and workplaces</i>) • Getting Knowledge and Skills (<i>with career based focus</i>) • Connecting Employers and Professionals (<i>in career fields</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet resources, including professional networking profile (Linkedin), other media • Informational networking with alumni and professionals • Internships, volunteering, visiting workplaces • Job fairs, company presentations, master-classes, etc. 	2 ^d – 3 ^d year
Final	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewing and Employment <i>or</i> • Admission to the Graduate Program for Master Degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced resume/cover letter/interviewing techniques • Description of graduate programs and application process 	4 th year

Conclusions. Universities should produce highly qualified specialists in demand of the labor market. Unfortunately, last year in Ukraine, according to the State Employment Service, more than 11,600 graduates with higher education applied for unemployment support [12]. In order to resolve this issue, it is necessary to ensure the readiness of the students to transit to the workplace after graduation. This is intended to be done by career services of each university. It is efficient to apply the concept of student career readiness, used in American universities [10], into Ukrainian career services practice, of course, taking into account the features of domestic higher education, and having carefully worked out the ways to achieve this readiness. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that the concept of career readiness is not equivalent to readiness for employment. It is much wider, since it involves not just placing graduates to work, but also sets the foundation for all their further successful professional development.

Realizing this concept implies further improvement of university career centers' activity – using a systematic approach in their work, enhancing interaction in the Student–Faculty–Career center trian-

gle, ensuring closer links with employers and searching for the new forms of cooperation between universities and enterprises.

Thus, it will provide an opportunity to achieve a new quality of national student career services, and that will help both to adapt the students for labor market conditions and to increase the level of student professionalism. Ultimately, it will be a significant contribution to improving the economic situation in the country and to further modernization of the Higher Education system in Ukraine.

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