The issue of cooperation between the university students and employers is relatively new for modern Russian business activity. Bibliography uncovering the idea of recruitment of graduates almost doesn’t exist though the advantages of this technique have been already noticed in the labour market [1]. In such conditions only appropriate positioning of the company–employer among students and graduates can attract and select the best graduates in the labour market.

Among the main fields of the Russian Government activities for the period up to 2018 there has been an intention to increase labour production by 1.5 times by 2018 with reference to 2011 and to create not less than 25 million of highly efficient working places by 2020. The ground for this is the investment growth and technological renovation of industry, development of competition, support of development of science and technology, advanced training of employed people and qualified labour market creation, development of international integration [3].

When working with students, modern employer is more interested not in their basic skills acquired in the University, but in their additional skills. Every expert defines the list of such skills differently. As a rule, when it comes to young professionals, the absence of communication skills and insufficient practical knowledge regarding the work as a part of a company are observed the most. Communication with graduates should be built based on the market demands. Graduates and University students cannot decide for themselves where they will work; they do not have any information concerning internships offered by employers; they do not know which companies are there in the market. That is the target group for which the open information in media about company activities is highly important; it’s the only source of information about junior positions.

Attraction of graduates should be dealt with not only due to the reasons connected with goals of HR services, but exactly in order to cut down expenses on staff recruitment. Young professionals still have unique qualities which distinguish them from experienced experts: ability to learn, to work with information and to analyze information; creative thinking; creativity; willingness to give their potential powers to the company for a relatively small remuneration of labour; high possibility to develop strong devotion of young professionals to the company, etc. In the modern times, the educational level of graduates differs a lot that of the Soviet times. Nowadays, the knowledge of young professionals is more relevant for modern business activities.

In the framework of the research devoted to cooperation between students of the universities and employers, we have conducted a questionnaire-based survey among the students of the Plekhanov Russian University of Economics. 200 students were questioned. The goal of this research was to reveal the differences in economic behaviour of university freshmen and graduates. The reasons for these differences are important for modern employers, who are interested in building the communication with universities. In order to build an attractive image of a company as an employer (HR brand) it is necessary to understand the most effective ways of communication with students and graduates [2]. When conducting our research, we used a questionnaire developed by us. It included seven questions, one of which was open. The respondents were offered to choose a field of business where they were planning to work in. 37% of undergraduates couldn’t decide on their future specialty; they were ready to consider different vacancies simultaneously in several business fields not connected with each other. The number of freshmen who could not make the decision was 60%. The data received is consistent, but the number of undecided does not diminish even by half and that is the point for concern. On the one hand, it can be explained by unwillingness to work according to the qualification acquired, and obtaining higher education for the sake of appearance. On the other hand, it can be explained by the low level of professionally oriented activities for students organised by the University administration and employers.

When choosing a company (an employer), the level of salary and career prospects appeared to be two major factors for graduates; the least important was the location of the company (distance from home). For freshmen, the significance of career prospects appeared to be more important than the salary. Such professionals are ready to work for minimal monetary reward in order to get the experience. Every year such a desire of students is obviously decreasing, as they gain theoretical and practical experience.

Respondents were also offered to indicate the most attractive companies-employers as if they were choosing their future job. Needless to say, all the respondents who took part in the survey, wanted to work in different business fields. Despite this fact, the companies indicated in questionnaires were well-known among customers due
to their product brand or services and among jobseekers in the labour market. These are global companies comprising experts of different levels and positions. It’s worth mentioning that it was much easier for undergraduate respondents to give an answer for this question than for freshmen. 13% of freshmen couldn’t answer the given question, they simply didn’t think about their future job. We can highlight two trends in economic behaviour of students. The first one is the value of practical experience when mixing work and studying. Such graduates face the market already having the experience, and this can help them to find the job. The second trend is the value of theoretical knowledge and the desire to face the market being well prepared theoretically.

The data received shows that the most of university graduates are not going to work according to their qualification, but anyway appear to be interested in being employed by choosing the best in the labour market. Their practical skills only confirm it in relation to today’s employers. To be assigned for the job in unknown company without any information about its internal operation processes – that’s not what a modern student wants. It proves that there is no more space for the notion of “lifetime employment” in our lives; young professionals became more ambitious and resilient, being ready to give their powers for the sake of the company’s positive image.

Gazprom company became the most attractive working place both for freshmen and undergraduates. The company was chosen for a reason. According to Head Hunter, in 2012 the company won the award in nomination “Best Employer”.

The respondents were offered to choose 3 or less factors according to which they could indicate company’s data. The results are reflected in per cent of total amount of answers.

The most important reasons for undergraduate students were: career prospects – 25.7%, company’s status in the labour market – 23.90%, familiarity of customers with products and services (brand) of the company – 21.70%. For freshmen: career prospects – 25.60%, company status in the labour market – 24.20%, high salary – 22.30%. Graduates are willing to work for companies having strong product brands. There is a tendency among freshmen to receive high salary and, at the same time, to have the possibility to study with the help of employers’ resources. Insignificant difference in data received indicates that the phenomenon is not highly developed, however the gist of economic behaviour of students at this stage is different.

The reasons for students to refuse employment offers, if there are no other job offers, are the following:

* Graduates and freshmen noted: no career prospects – 26.70% and 26.60%; negative image of a company – 21.20% and 21.80%; salary is below market level – 20.50% and 19.90%. When choosing a work place the respondents are not afraid of absence of any training programmes – 6.20% and 7%, as well as inconvenient location of a company – 8.80% and 11.4%.

The respondents were offered to choose the source of information which they pay attention to when looking for a future company of employment. For undergraduates, the top one became: Top to bottom / Bottom to top list of employers – 20.20%; mass media – 17.40%, company’s official website – 16.70%. For freshmen: mass media – 19.5%, Top to bottom / Bottom to top list of employers and the company’s official website – 17.2% each.

Average per cent diversity in the sources revealed doesn’t exceed 1.2%, which demonstrates that young professionals are ready to get information about a company by means of various sources.

We would like to mention that this question didn’t involve the whole range of possible communication channels, but only conventional ones. It reveals openness and willingness of students to receive information about a company through all sorts of sources. However, there has been traced a tendency for mass media to take a leading part. It’s important for a young professional simply to obtain corporate information about a company, and the way to get it is next in the line.

One of the questions of the questionaire offered to choose the most interesting activities operated by a company-employer. The respondents had to choose up to three options. The respondents distinguished main significant activities: internships – 36.40% (graduates) and 38.20% (freshmen), company tours – 23.30% (graduates) and 20.10% (freshmen).

Most of the questions in the questionnaire included the option “other” and the respondents could write down their own answers. When the answers were processed we noticed that this option was not popular among students and was marked only 4 times. This data regarding the mentioned option can mean either unwillingness to think, analyse, or lack of students’ competence regarding this subject.

Summarizing the presented results we can distinguish some differences in economic behaviour of students – freshmen and graduates.

Questionnaire survey of freshmen revealed that they still don’t know which field they want to work in; they know little about modern employers; receive information about companies’ activities through mass media; want to take part in internships; will not consider working for a company with bad image and no career prospects; ready to give up on training programmes for the sake of higher salary.

Economic behaviour of graduates can be described by following: they still haven’t decided which field they want to work in, but they are well aware of the best employers in the labour market. They also receive information about companies’ activities through mass media and want to take part in internships. When choosing a job the main criteria for young professionals are the following: career prospects, high salary, and the company image.

It is worth noting that the conducted research shows future directions the issue may develop. More comprehensive study should take into account additional variables like gender diversity. Research hypothesis is that the differences in economic behaviour of university freshmen and graduates exist, but they are not significant. There is a logical trend – growth of information awareness of graduates. There is also a trend in decreasing psychological influence on
Graduates are more ready to sacrifice their material remuneration in exchange for the value of practical experience. Freshmen are not ready for such steps and rank first their purely economic goals demonstrating their confident nature. Insignificant differences also prove that professionally oriented activities are not developed enough in Institutions of Higher Education. The possibility to develop tools for cooperation with students can help to prepare them for efficient and conflict-free collaboration with their future employers.

References:

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