

## Original Article

### **Toward a model of preparation of students in the context of their functioning in the labour market (based on the examples of universities in Poland and Ukraine)**

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#### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The proposed study is a new approach toward the perspective of university education in the conditions of globalization changes oriented on improving the competitiveness of the future professionals on the basics of formed competencies which are also constantly variable. **Material:** The paper is based on the analysis of the source materials and own investigations in the sphere of academic education in terms of the expectations of Polish and Ukrainian students in the context of the preparation to the labour market functioning. The motivation for the study was the demonstration of the actual problems faced by university graduates in the two countries and the search for ways to resolve them in the realities of a dynamically changing labour market. The approach according to which modern employers attach less importance to the resource of academic knowledge, focusing on the practical competencies that allow adapting to change quickly, is illustrated in the paper. **Results:** The results of the study which involved 310 Polish and 263 Ukrainian students of the pedagogical departments demonstrated that the most important thing in the professional training process is the development of social competencies and the ability to make a self - presentation. The vast majority also recognized that they possess valuable competencies in the labour market. Polish students noticed the largest deficit only in their office and mathematical competencies (at the same time, they considered them important in the labour market). **Conclusions:** The important result of the study is the confirmation by the students of the importance of practical experience as one of the most important activities in the process of higher education implementation as well.

**Key words:** education; labour market; practical competences; students; work

#### **Introduction**

Today, in the era of dynamic socio-economic changes, it seems important to discuss the quality and functioning of the modern system of higher education, especially in the context of preparing future graduates for the role they will play in the labour market in the future (Pelekh, Kukla, 2019; Novopysmennyi et al., 2020; Momot et al., 2020; Kashuba et al., 2020; Tomanek, Lis, 2020; Gozhenko et al., 2018a; Gozhenko et al., 2018b). The heated scientific debate over the relationship between the university and the labour market is proof of this (Besson, 2015). The university seems to be of crucial importance in preparing future graduates to perform their professional roles in the future (providing necessary knowledge and skills) and entering the labour market (developing job search skills, self-presentation etc.). This assistance should consist in providing support in the broadly understood process of professional development and starting from the choice of field of study, specialization, through the selection of appropriate forms of competence development during and after investigations, by preparing young people to enter and operate on the labour market (Kukla, 2019). However, different countries have different policies and institutions, so the forces that affect the relationship between university education and the labour market, being global, differ depending on the specific structure of higher education and the labour market (Lauder, Mayhew, 2020). Having considered this, we chose to study two similar forms of the labour market and the education market. In the constellation of Polish and Ukrainian academic education

Education and what people draw from it is an essential factor in building foundations for society's progress. The dynamic development and continuous improvement of societies and individuals mean that the concept of entrepreneurial society, in which innovation and entrepreneurship are regular, constant, and steady, is becoming more critical (compare Drucker, 2012). In this society, "individuals face enormous challenges, including the need for constant learning, some things all over again" (compare Drucker, 2012). The dynamics of changes mean that nowadays, young people must be prepared because now and in the future, they will have to make quick decisions. These decisions are even more difficult because we live in a time of uncertainty dictated by the dynamics of changes and information overload. The amount of information that everyone has access to

almost at any time is, on the one hand, excellent facilitation. Still, on the other, the information chaos supported by pop culture, the development of mass media means that young people can get lost in the meaning of information, which is valuable and meaningful. In such times, it is challenging to preserve their identity, not to follow fashion, which is not always consistent with our deeply rooted values, aspirations. "Society of knowledge inevitably becomes more competitive than ever known to the society of the past. This is for a simple reason: knowledge is widely available, there is no excuse for incompetence and inefficiency." The above words of Peter Drucker (2012) determine the present day's image with a certain quality.

Higher education in Poland and Ukraine requires corrective actions, especially since it is one of the essential social life sectors. Globalization forces the education process to change towards innovative education that would overcome schematic teaching's terrible habits. Schools must set new goals for themselves. It is not the information and skills that determine success but the right attitude.

Universities in the structure in which they currently operate cannot keep up with the needs of the labour market. Higher education shows a lower dynamics of change adaptation than the labour market (Jeruszka, 2011). In the report "Future of the World" Federic Mayor (2001) writes, "many challenges will weigh on the future of education in the next twenty years. The first challenge is the availability and constant updating of competencies (...) at all levels."

A characteristic feature of the times in which we live is the growing demands on employees and their professionalism, which is determined, among others, by acquiring new skills (Kukla, Nowacka, 2018). Specific challenges that future graduates are facing also result from changes in the labour market. "The economic crisis characterized by reduced production (...), limited capacity of the economy to absorb labour resources, entering the labour market of the baby boom generations, (...) discriminatory, recruitment practices of employers" (Piryg, 2013) are selected aspects that influence the current situation young people on the labour market. It is worth mentioning that currently, among others, job candidates' competency requirements are changing (so-called soft skills are increasingly valued), which young people should be particularly aware of. Besides, in the aspect of the specificity of the modern labour market, a special challenge posed to young people is not the effective searching for jobs and efficient response to the needs of the labour market, but their creation (in line with their capabilities, talents, predispositions, aspirations, and conditions). The above changes are not indifferent to how young people plan and manage their careers in the contemporary reality of the education and labour market (Zajac, 2015).

The university's task is to transfer knowledge. Still, this knowledge should be "general enough for a graduate to apply it in the face of the most diverse challenges of a changing market. Excessive <pragmatization> of the university consisting in teaching to the current demand of the labour market threatens to narrow the horizons, and in the long terms limits the area of competence - especially because of the forecasts that current students will change the profile of professional activity several times during their professional life, (...) therefore creativity, openness to change and broad general knowledge is the most important." (Fankowski et al., 2005). However, the above-mentioned generality of knowledge does not exclude the fact that the university's duty is first and foremost to provide students with knowledge at a very high substantive level, because the society developing factor is to educate the most talented (at the maximum level) and most diligent students and to facilitate their professional start. This facilitation of professional start can be seen in equipping the student with tools that enable the adaptation to change conditions and expectations of the labour market and new reality. Therefore, universities should educate graduates equipped with extensive knowledge and professional skills. Students and graduates should simultaneously understand society's needs and have a will to act for the common good and a desire for self-improvement.

Contemporary times expect and at the same time require from the education system new challenges in the area of education and education of the young generation, the generation of "tomorrow", which will set the course for all socio-economic changes but also set trends, among others, on the education and labour market. At the same time, it will be the creator of these areas. Today, education must adapt and follow the rapid changes that are taking place here and now, which we are witnessing and are also perpetrators. The constantly changing labour market forces young people to improve, preferably in different areas at the same time. It requires flexibility and dynamism, mobility, and creativity. The individual must accept this and try to meet the requirements of today's permanently changing labour market. Internationalization and the constant change that occurs in the area of human work and thus also in the labour market cause constant adaptation of the individual to new norms and rules prevailing in the world (Kukla, 2018a).

It is worth noting that universities cannot prepare individuals perfectly for work because the working environments themselves are changing too quickly (Duda, 2019). They are primarily intended to provide such knowledge and skills that will increase employability and shape future employees. The theory that young people acquire for many years within the university walls is undoubtedly necessary to perform a specific profession. However, it must go hand in hand with apprenticeships or contacts with the world of employers (Kukla, 2017). Globalization forces the education process to change towards innovative education that would overcome schematic teaching's terrible habits. Schools must set new goals for themselves. It is not the news and skills that determine success, but the right attitude. "Universities should be more open to their economic environment. (...) if the structure of education differs significantly from the employment structure, the needs of the economy and

the demand for specific qualifications or occupations, then there is dysfunctionality and irrationality of these structures" (Jeruszka, 2011).

The university's openness to the social and economic surroundings should constantly adapt education programs to the needs of the labour market and transfer knowledge and innovation between universities and enterprises (Strategia, 2010). Analyzing the specific situation that is currently taking place on the higher education market in Poland and Ukraine, it is worth pointing out the specific transformations taking place in that market and the related challenges that young people face in the context of planning their professional future and the process of transition to the labour market. Can identify the following selected changes and challenges can be identified (Sultana, 2004; Kukla, Zając, 2015):

✓ Diversity and flexibility of universities' educational offer - higher education is becoming more and more diverse - students can benefit from many different forms of education offered by various institutions of higher education. Increasingly, instruction takes the form of modular systems. More and more universities create greater flexibility for students in the selection of content and forms of classes. Such changes are, of course, a positive effect of the universities' efforts to meet the requirements of the labour market and the expectations of students (Kukla, Zając, 2015). On the one hand, the states can choose subjects consistent with students' interests and, very notably, employers' expectations.

✓ On the other hand, they can pose some additional complications for students. To make a rational choice of the study program should be guided by knowing one's interests and possibilities and goals and professional plans. Besides, students should demonstrate knowledge of the labour market - the need for specific skills and competencies.

✓ The marketization of education and increase in the enrolment rate - in recent times, access to higher education is more accessible, associated with an increase in the enrolment rate. There are more university graduates, and the market is becoming more saturated. In this context, graduates very often must face high competition in the labour market. However, the possession of a university diploma ceases to be their bargaining power. The marketization of higher education may contribute to the flexibility of instruction.

✓ On the other hand, it may go in close association with a decrease in the quality of education. Besides, it favours a situation in which access to education becomes simple even for people who do not show adequate skills or commitment (Piryg, 2013). Therefore, students should plan their professional development path already at the stage of study to compete and stand out in the labour market (Kukla, 2018b).

✓ New opportunities for educational and professional development - as a result of the above, contemporary students and graduates should take advantage of various opportunities to acquire competencies valued in the labour market to become attractive candidates. Due to the high competition in the labour market, this task is not the easiest. On the other hand, the diversity of the educational offer and the marketization of education (which favours competition between universities) mean that universities offer many different development opportunities for students - from training, workshops, cooperation with local business, through a wide offer of exchanges and trips abroad. All this means that today students have a wide range of educational and professional development opportunities (Kukla, Zając, 2015).

✓ **The purpose** of the proposed study is, based on research data, to determine the expectations from university graduates' academic education in Ukraine and Poland and the possibility of employment in the labour market. The material containing empirical data should serve as a criterion for improving universities' quality of education and interaction with employers.

## Material and Methods

*Participants.* Research on the expectations of the selected group of representatives of the young generation towards university was conducted among students of pedagogical faculties (Jan Długosz University of Humanities and Natural Sciences in Częstochowa and the Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education in Warsaw) in March-May 2018, and at Rivne Humanities University in Rivne (Ukraine) in the same year. Pilot studies preceded the research. A total of 310 people took part in the Polish side study, and 263 on the Ukrainian side. 280 female students and 30 male students from Poland and 223 female students, and 40 male students from Ukraine joined the study. Due to the specificity of pedagogical faculties, the structure of the respondents was primarily women. Interpretation of research results should, therefore, mainly refer to students of pedagogical studies.

*Procedure/Test protocol/Skill test trial/Measure/Instruments.* Students born after 1990 were deliberately selected for the relevant research, although the research showed that most respondents were people born after 1995. In the case of the described research, it can be certainly assumed that the surveyed students represented the young generation. The surveyed people generally did not have professional experience (171 indications on the Polish side and 219 on the Ukrainian side), which may be an important consideration in the context of the subject of the study, which was to examine the expectations of the university and to prepare for real changes in the labour market as well as issues in real life planning further professional development.

*Data collection and analysis / Statistical analysis.* The statistical analysis of the material gathered was carried out using the PS IMAGO PRO 6.0 / IBM SPSS 26, corporate licensee Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun, Poland, and Microsoft Excel. For statistical analysis, the Pearson's chi-square test was employed to assess

whether the research sample's dependencies were an effect of a more general regularity in the general population or a random output only. The test is applied when variables of qualitative and not quantitative character are used for the analysis. In statistics, V Cramer (sometimes referred to as Cramer's phi and denoted as  $\phi_c$ ) is a measure of association between two nominal variables, giving a value between 0 and +1 (inclusive). The statistical test result was the so-called test probability (p), whose low values proved the statistical significance of considered differences. The statistical significance in this analysis was assumed  $p < 0.05$ .

## Results

Expectations towards a university - in the light of conducted research.

Table 1. What has the most significant impact on the quality of higher education?					
LP	Factors	Poland		Ukraine	
		N=310	%	N=263	%
1.	Preparation of lecturers	213	68,70	213	80,98
2.	Emphasis on practical training	180	58,06	126	47,90
3.	Cooperation with business	39	12,58	49	18,63
4.	Developed infrastructure	26	8,38	70	26,61
5.	Efficient administrative service	30	9,67	23	8,74
6.	Professor staff	88	28,38	76	28,99
7.	High position of university in the rankings	28	9,03	53	20,15
8.	High demands towards students	73	23,54	61	23,19
9.	Friendly atmosphere	138	44,51	104	39,54
10.	Others (what?)	0	0	2	0,76

Source: based on own research

Chi-squared independence tests Value df Asymptotic (two-sided) Chi-squared Pearson 47.322a 9 .000 Credibility quotient 49.042 9 .000 N important observations 1592 and 10.0% of cells (2) have an expected size of less than 5. The minimum expected size is .98. Symmetrical measures Approximate Value Nominal by Nominal Phi .172 .000 V Cramer .172 .000 Continence factor .170 .000 N important observations 1592

The quality of education is the degree to which it meets the growing requirements of the environment. It helps develop the individual while ensuring the continuous development of scientific and teaching staff. Quality should be assessed both by the results of the services provided and by the process itself that leads to the effect (Rzepka, Toczyńska 2014). In the research, the emphasis was placed on preparing a unit of a certain quality. In the light of the above analyses, it appears that the respondents put a lot of emphasis on staff training preparation. This is the fundamental factor that determines the appropriate practice to perform social roles after completing education. Today, it is expected and required from the teaching staff to achieve new challenges in educating the young generation, the generation of "tomorrow", which will set the course for all socio-political and economic changes, but also set current trends.

Harvard's history and contemporary activities perfectly fit into the above considerations. Harvard gained its "reputation, not because the state gave a lot of money or someone wrote a wise law on promoting the best US universities. Harvard has become synonymous with quality in higher education because it was the first university to adapt to a dynamically developing society's needs after the Civil War. (...) Students could choose a significant part of subjects, new, practical faculties were introduced, and the research program was developed. Today, Harvard has become a model for most American universities that make up the world's leading universities." (Dobrowolski 2019).

Table 2. Expectations towards higher education.					
LP	Factors	Poland		Ukraine	
		N=310	%	N=263	%
1.	Transfer of specialist knowledge (in each industry)	222	71,61	195	74,14
2.	Transfer of universal knowledge (interdisciplinary, general academic)	63	20,32	43	16,35
3.	Developing practical skills (within a given industry)	221	71,29	174	66,16
4.	Developing skills in navigating the labour market	69	22,25	76	28,89
5.	Instilling key competencies in the chosen profession	92	29,67	134	50,95
6.	Instilling universal competencies, valuable at work (in general)	60	19,35	68	25,85
7.	Diploma	47	15,16	62	23,57
8.	I have no special expectations – studying is just a good, fun	8	2,58	18	6,84
9.	Others (what?)	2	0,64	3	1,14

Source: based on own research

Chi-squared independence tests Value df Asymptotic significance (two-sided) Pearson's chi-squared 25.791a 8 .001 Credibility quotient 25.9828 .001 N important observations 1557 and 11.1% of cells (2) have an expected size of less than 5. The minimum expected size is 2.48. Symmetrical measures Approximate Significance Value Nominal by Nominal Phi .129 .001 V Cramer .129 .001 Continence factor .128 .001 N important observations 1557

Respondents were asked what their expectations for academic education were. It turns out that the vast majority of them expect above all the transfer of specialist knowledge and the development of practical skills (in a particular industry, the field of study) - that is, students as the most desirable area indicated precisely the one which they rate the highest. Subsequently, students expect to be equipped with critical competencies in the chosen profession. They do not wish to develop navigating the labor market and provide students with so-called universal and interdisciplinary knowledge - students do not see the university's leading role in such activities.

The respondents were also asked about the university's activities in preparation for entering the labour market. How do you assess your university's activity in preparing students to enter the labor market? (in selected areas) the preparation for work in a group and substantive preparation for performing a professional role was most highly assessed. Noteworthy is also indicating by respondents the preparation for practice. Unfortunately, in the remaining areas they were asked, the surveyed students more often answered, suggesting that they do not feel well prepared or not the home university's merit. The least rated areas were preparation for preparing application documents, developing entrepreneurial attitudes, and preparing for active job search. Lack of preparation for entering the labour market seems essential in the era of dynamic changes in that market. Studies constitute the highest education stage, which is the culmination of preparation for professional work and independent living.

Table 3. How do you assess your university's activity in preparing students to enter the labour market? Poland									
LP	Factors	I feel prepared – it is thanks to my university		I feel prepared, but it is not thanks to my university (self-commitment / other institution)		I do not feel prepared		I have no opinion	
		N=310	%	N=310	%	N=310	%	N=310	%
1	Preparation for an active job	49	15,80	111	35,80	110	35,48	35	11,21
2	Preparation for creating	22	7,09	126	40,64	125	40,32	30	9,67
3	Preparation for effective self-presentation	77	24,83	109	35,16	84	27,09	27	8,70
4	Preparation for practice (specific skills)	<b>100</b>	<b>32,25</b>	90	29,03	81	26,12	33	10,64
5	Preparation for group work (development of interpersonal competencies)	<b>140</b>	<b>45,16</b>	109	35,16	37	11,93	19	6,12
6	Preparation for further planning and development of one's career	55	17,74	134	43,22	84	27,09	29	9,35
7	Substantive preparation for performing a professional role (extensive knowledge)	<b>122</b>	<b>39,35</b>	70	22,58	73	23,54	42	13,54
8	Development of entrepreneurial attitudes	36	11,61	99	31,93	99	31,93	70	22,58

Source: based on own research

Chi-squared independence tests Value df Asymptotic significance (two-sided) Pearson's Chi-Square 378.145a 21 .000 Credibility quotient 430.492 21 .000 N important observations 2427 and 0.0% of cells (0) have an expected size of less than 5. The minimum expected size is 26.92. Symmetrical measures Approximate Significance Value Nominal by Nominal Phi .395 .000 V Cramer .228 .000 .367 .000 N important observations 2427

Table 4. How do you assess your university's activity in preparing students to enter the labour market? Ukraine									
LP	Factors	I feel prepared – it is thanks to my university		I feel prepared, but it is not thanks to my university (self-commitment / other institution)		I do not feel prepared		I have no opinion	
		N=263	%	N=263	%	N=263	%	N=263	%
1	Preparation for an active job search	58	22,05	142	53,94	37	14,06	23	8,74
2	Preparation for creating application documents	47	17,87	100	38,02	62	23,57	22	8,36
3	Preparation for effective self-presentation	83	31,55	114	43,34	49	18,63	9	3,42
4	Preparation for practice (specific skills)	<b>133</b>	<b>50,57</b>	83	31,55	31	11,78	12	4,56
5	Preparation for group work (development of interpersonal competencies)	<b>119</b>	<b>44,24</b>	103	39,16	21	7,98	16	6,08
6	Preparation for further planning and development of one's career	76	28,89	116	44,10	53	20,15	15	5,70
7	Substantive preparation for performing a professional role (extensive knowledge)	<b>126</b>	<b>47,90</b>	73	27,75	47	17,87	13	4,94
8	Development of entrepreneurial attitudes	38	14,44	85	32,31	78	29,65	58	22,05

Source: own research

Chi-squared independence tests Value df Asymptotic significance (two-sided) Chi-squared Pearson 334.069a 21 .000 Credibility quotient 322.819 21 .000 N important observations 2042 and 0.0% of cells (0) have an expected size of less than 5. The minimum expected number is 13.91. Symmetrical measures Approximate Significance Value Nominal by Nominal Phi .404 .000 V Cramer .234 .000 .375 .000 N important observations 2042

The student's opinion on the effectiveness of universities' activities is not satisfactory. Students mainly pay attention to the limitations of higher education's practical dimension, which results in a lack of proper preparation to perform a professional role.

Based on the above conclusions, it can be noted that modern universities face the challenge of adapting their offer to current expectations so that assessing the effectiveness of their activities is positive. To indicate directions of possible changes, it is worth analysing the students' expectations towards universities and the expectations of employers towards job candidates.

Changes in the functioning of higher education such as, among others, greater diversity, flexibility of educational offers, student migrations, greater access to trips (domestic and foreign) are only selected factors affecting the way of studying, making choices, shaping oneself as a future employee, planning own educational and professional career. These changes, adequately used by students, can significantly facilitate broadly understood professional development and thus functioning on the labour market. Comprehensive access to education, a variety of fields of study, a multitude of possibilities and forms of educational development (such as participation in scientific associations, conferences for students, trips abroad, etc.) can cause educational and professional development planned in many ways. On the other hand, this multitude of possibilities may cause some dilemmas and difficulties in choosing the most appropriate development form. The information chaos, which accompanies e.g., the marketization of education, and hence the emergence of many different - often fascinating, though mysteriously sounding faculties - can cause difficulties in choosing the proper education. One that will be consistent with the individual's predispositions as well as the needs of the labour market.

However, it is difficult to state unequivocally that universities should only prepare for work. Their task is also to expand general knowledge about the world. Hence, learning outcomes should not "outperform" the other goals, and their best solution is their compatibility. Universities, which should be clearly emphasized, cannot prepare units perfect for work because the working environments are changing too quickly. They are primarily intended to provide such knowledge and skills that will increase employability and thus shape future employees. The theory that young people acquire for many years within the university walls is undoubtedly an element necessary to perform a specific profession but must go hand in hand with apprenticeships or contacts with employers' world.

**Table 5. What competencies, above all, do you think are valuable in the labour market - how do you assess your potential in this area? Poland**

LP	Competences	I consider it essential in the labour market – I feel that I possess it (I gained it at the university)		I consider it essential in the labour market – I feel that I possess it (I gained it during my free time)		I find it essential in the labour market - I feel I lack them - I would like to get them during my studies		I do not consider it essential in the labour market	
		N=310	%	N=310	%	N=310	%	N=310	%
1.	Cognitive <sup>1</sup>	102	32,90	114	36,77	63	20,32	14	4,51
2.	Self-	73	23,54	179	57,74	41	13,22	4	1,29
3.	Artistic	47	15,16	120	38,71	63	20,32	65	20,96
4.	Physical	49	15,80	131	42,25	54	17,41	60	19,35
5.	Interpersonal	105	33,87	141	45,48	41	13,22	5	1,61
6.	Managerial	52	16,77	111	35,80	109	35,16	24	7,74
7.	Office work	40	12,90	100	32,25	120	38,71	35	11,29
8.	Technical	42	13,54	115	37,09	100	32,25	39	12,58
9.	Computer	51	16,45	139	44,83	83	26,77	23	7,41
10.	Mathematic	41	13,22	88	28,38	84	27,09	72	23,22
11.	Linguistic	84	27,09	117	37,74	86	27,74	9	2,90
12.	Self-	112	36,12	111	35,80	66	21,29	5	1,61
13.	Social (i.e.,	167	53,87	95	30,64	29	9,35	4	1,29

Source: based on own research

Chi-squared independence tests Value df Asymptotic significance (two-sided) Pearson's Chi-Square 685.714a 36 .000 Reliability quotient 664.531 36 .000 N important observations 3824 and 0.0% of cells (0) have an expected size of less than 5. The minimum expected number is 26.76. Symmetrical measures Approximate Significance Value Nominal by Nominal Phi .423 .000 V Cramer .244 .000 .390 .000 N important observations 3824

**Table 6. What competencies, above all, do you think are valuable in the labour market - how do you assess your potential in this area? Ukraine**

LP	Competences	I consider it essential in the labour market – I feel that I possess it (I gained it at the university)		I consider it essential in the labour market – I feel that I possess it (I gained it during my free time)		I find it essential in the labour market - I feel I lack them - I would like to get them during my studies		I do not consider it essential in the labour market	
		N=263	%	N=263	%	N=263	%	N=263	%
1.	Cognitive <sup>2</sup>	151	57,41	72	27,37	32	12,16	6	2,28
2.	Self-	76	28,89	149	56,65	33	12,54	1	0,38

<sup>1</sup> They are searching and analyzing information and concluding. They are associated with the ability to learn, understand and remember, and openness and willingness to explore the world, and a fresh look.

<sup>2</sup> They are searching and analyzing information and concluding. They are associated with the ability to learn, understand and remember, and openness and willingness to explore the world, and a fresh look.

3.	Artistic	43	16,35	79	30,03	87	33,04	47	17,87
4.	Physical	39	14,82	100	38,02	75	28,51	43	16,35
5.	Interpersonal	69	26,23	105	39,92	61	23,19	20	7,60
6.	Managerial	<b>96</b>	36,50	97	36,88	58	22,05	6	2,28
7.	Office work	67	25,47	82	31,17	75	28,51	35	13,30
8.	Technical	63	23,95	87	33,08	68	25,85	37	14,06
9.	Computer	<b>96</b>	36,50	88	33,46	52	19,77	19	7,22
10.	Mathematic	65	24,71	74	28,13	76	28,89	42	15,97
11.	Linguistic	<b>113</b>	42,96	99	37,64	39	14,82	7	2,66
12.	Self-	80	30,41	120	45,62	53	20,15	8	3,04
13.	Social (i.e.,	<b>109</b>	41,44	94	35,74	44	16,73	11	4,18

Source: based on own research

Chi-squared independence tests Value df Asymptotic significance (two-sided) Pearson's Chi-Square 410.821a 36 .000 Credibility quotient 419.673 36 .000 N important observations 3348 and 0.0% of cells (0) have an expected size of less than 5. The minimum expected number is 21.48. Symmetrical measures Approximate Significance Value Nominal by Nominal Phi .350 .000 V Cramer .202 .000 .331 .000 N important observations 3348

What is interesting, the students themselves, when asked what types/groups of competencies they consider the most important on the contemporary labour market, pointed to social competencies - i.e., those that are expected to be acquired in the course of study, and just self-presentation - i.e., those which in their expectations towards the university are less valuable.

It turns out that students assessed most of the competencies presented in the course of the study as important on the labour market (as less important they rated only self-organization and interpersonal competencies, on the Ukrainian side - physical and artistic - this may be due to the specificity of the studied field). The vast majority also recognized that they possess valuable competencies in the labour market. Polish students noticed the most significant deficit only in their office and mathematical competencies (at the same time, they considered them essential in the labour market). They rated their self-organizing competencies relatively high. What's more, considering the declared source and method of acquiring competencies, students mostly attribute here merits to themselves and their non-university activity and not to university activity. In their opinion, only the acquisition of social and self-presentation competencies is mainly due to the university's activities. The "higher education system requires changes that adapt to the economy's requirements and the needs of modern society. It is necessary to move away from passive transfer of knowledge towards interactive skills training." (Maison, 2016).

The below presented tabular sets refer to the aspects of acquiring knowledge, skills, and competencies. The practical aspect dominates in all three combinations. Respondents consider practical experience as one of the most critical activities during the implementation of higher education. Through practice, they gain knowledge - considering that this is the best form of acquiring knowledge in each field. The internship organized in the workplace is the most effective method of acquiring specific skills. Developing relevant competencies is also a domain of apprenticeships in the workplace. University graduates are expected to know the skills and realities in which they will function in the future and the specifics of an organization or enterprise's functioning. This largely determines their quality and market value as future employees.

**Table 7. Which method of acquiring professional knowledge seems most effective to you?**

LP	Factors	Poland		Ukraine	
		N=310	%	N=263	%
1.	Through practice (during studies)	<b>187</b>	<b>60,32</b>	149	56,65
2.	Through practice (after studies)	<b>98</b>	<b>31,61</b>	68	25,85
3.	During classes as part of studies – in the giving method (i.e., lecture)	10	3,22	21	7,98
4.	During classes as part of studies – through independent work (projects, independent preparation for classes, etc.)	9	2,90	23	8,74
5.	Others (which?)	2	0,64	2	0,76

Source: based on own research

Chi-squared independence tests Value df Asymptotic significance (two-sided) Pearson's chi-squared 16.593a 4 .002 Credibility quotient 16.832 4 .002 N important observations 569 and 20.0% of cells (2) have an expected size of less than 5. The minimum expected number is 1.85. Symmetrical measures Approximate Significance Value Nominal by Nominal Phi .171 .002 V Cramer .171 .002 Continence factor .168 .002 N important observations 569

**Table 8. Which method of acquiring skills during your studies seems the most effective to you?**

LP	Factors	Poland		Ukraine	
		N=310	%	N=263	%
1.	During internships organised in the workplace	<b>186</b>	<b>60,00</b>	139	52,85
2.	During exercises, practical classes at the university	<b>92</b>	<b>29,67</b>	90	34,22
3.	As part of independent work, while preparing for classes	24	7,74	30	11,40
4.	Other (which?)	1	0,32	4	1,42

Source: based on own research

Chi-squared independence tests Value df Asymptotic significance (two-sided) Chi-squared Pearson 6.491a 3 .090 Reliability quotient 6.609 3 .085 N important observations 566 and 25.0% of cells (2) have an expected size of less than 5. The minimum expected number is 2.32. Symmetrical measures Approximate Significance Value Nominal by Nominal Phi .107 .090 V Cramer .107 .090 Convergence factor .106 .090 N important observations 566

**Table 9. Which method of acquiring competencies during studies seems the most effective to you?**

LP	Factors	Poland		Ukraine	
		N=310	%	N=263	%
1.	During internships organised in the workplace	158	50,96	137	52,09
2.	During exercises, practical classes at the university	90	29,03	78	29,65
3.	As part of independent work, while preparing for classes	31	10,00	21	7,98
4.	During pieces of training organised by university	20	6,45	22	8,38
5.	During individual work with a career advisor	5	1,61	4	1,52
6.	Other (which?)	0	0	1	0,38

Source: based on own research

Chi-squared independence tests Value df Asymptotic significance (two-sided) Pearson Chi-square 2.530a 5 .772 Credibility quotient 2.9155 .713 N important observations 567 and 33.3% of cells (4) have an expected size of less than 5. The minimum expected size is .46. Symmetrical measures Approximate Value Nominal by Nominal Phi .067 .772 V Cramer .067 .772 Continence factor .067 .772 N important observations 567

**Table 10. What potential activities initiated by your University could increase your success in the labour market?**

LP	Factors	Poland		Ukraine	
		N=310	%	N=263	%
1.	Creating interest clubs in line with the needs of the labour market	81	26,12	75	29,27
2.	Putting more emphasis on practical activities	178	57,41	136	51,71
3.	Workshops preparing for an active job search	102	32,90	91	34,60
4.	Teaching techniques of preparing application documents and preparing for an interview	67	21,61	80	30,41
5.	Realizing your strengths and directions in which you can develop them	74	23,87	59	22,43
6.	Support in constructing professional plans, determining one's career path	60	19,35	66	25,09
7.	Participation in pieces of training, industry courses	101	32,58	72	27,37
8.	Knowledge about the requirements of employers in each industry	31	10	65	24,71
9.	Knowledge about the requirements of selected professions, education options, raising qualifications for a specific profession	60	19,35	107	40,68
10.	Others (which?)	0	0	6	2,28
11.	None	4	1,29	5	1,40

Source: based on own research

Chi-squared independence tests

Value df Asymptotic significance (two-sided) Chi-squared Pearson 45.834a 10 .000 Credibility quotient 48,643 10 .000 N important observations 1520 and 18.2% of cells (4) have an expected size of less than 5. The minimum expected size is 2.99. Symmetrical measures Approximate Significance Value Nominal by Nominal Phi .174 .000 V Cramer .174 .000 .171 .000 N important observations 1520

It is also worth emphasizing that in the aspect of the specificity of the modern labour market (resulting from the peculiar stagnation of some branches of the economy), a particular challenge posed to young people is not so much effective job search and efficient response to the needs of the labour market but creating them (in line with their capabilities, talents, predispositions and aspirations and needs). This approach to designing their careers and independently creating market opportunities by students of future graduates can determine their advantage on the market and lead them to success. It should, therefore, also be a kind of challenge to global education (Pukelis, 2014).

### Discussion

The central issue that emerged from this study is the ability of modern universities in Ukraine and Poland to meet the expectations of students' academic education in these countries and the connection of this process with the possibility of employment. This was preceded by the solution of several research questions, such as:

1. What are the expectations from the academic education of students in Ukraine and Poland? How do they relate to building a professional career and employment opportunities in today's globalized labour market?
2. Assessment by students of the effectiveness of universities and changes in the functioning of higher education.
3. In the opinion of students, types/groups of competencies are the most important in getting the first job in the globalized labour market. Is the university able to ensure the formation of such competencies?
4. How important is it for students to gain practical experience while studying at university?

Were received the answer to the first question after analyzing the first sample (Chart 1-2). Most students claimed that they expected the transfer of specialist knowledge and practical skills (in a particular industry, the field of study). Noteworthy is also indicating by respondents the preparation for practice. From this, we can conclude that students understand the importance of acquiring theoretical knowledge and their transformation into an experimental plane. In the case of the remaining, the answers were not so good and testified to the passive role of university education in preparation for employment. At the same time, we did not consider the dependence of the perception of the quality of education on the current status of students and their socio-economic origin (Akareem, Hossain, 2012).

Of all the students said, we were most concerned about the lack of development of entrepreneurial position. Similar studies also indicate a lack of connection between entrepreneurial intentions, modern education, and university life (Jwara, Hoque, 2018). This partially answers the second research question, namely the inconsistency of university education with the time's needs and the lack of clear reforms in this direction. Finally, yet importantly, respondents noted the lack of special training to enter the labour market. Nevertheless,

some similar research (Frankowska et al., 2015) gives hope that students consider themselves well prepared for further work. Therefore, concerning this issue, in our opinion, it is necessary to carry out more focused scientific research.

In the research, we confirm the importance for students of social competencies that they will acquire in the learning process (Chart 6), which will be decisive factors for further employment. This fact is confirmed in other studies, as some universities develop particular strategies for forming social competencies (Parfilova, Karimova, 2015).

The study also answers the importance of gaining practical experience by students for the success of future employment. In our view, work experience programs should be introduced for further progress in this issue, as has been the case in the UK since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Powell, 2001).

Answering the research questions, we reaffirm the relevance of this research and its importance in reforming higher education to improve future professionals' readiness to find a leading position in the globalized labour market. Based on colleagues' opinions, we hoped to provide clear recommendations for students to meet their expectations of academic education while studying at the university.

## Conclusions

The results of the presented research, which students and graduates of Polish and Ukrainian universities attended, indicate that they appreciate the opportunity to acquire knowledge and professional skills during education that will enable them to perform professional activities in the future. At the same time, however, universities' effectiveness in transferring this type of knowledge and skills is not highly rated by students. The surveyed students pointed to the need to put more emphasis on practical education. Based on the research, it also seems that students do not show a demand for education during the so-called personal competences (which, however, they consider important in the labour market). Students, however, tend to have high self-assessment of this type of competence. Therefore, they may not feel the need to develop them during their studies (they believe that they can do it on their own). On the other hand, however, they do not consider it effective to acquire knowledge and skills in the course of self-preparation for classes and broadly understood self-education. This shows inconsistency in the students' statements and opinions.

**Summing up** the analyses, it should be stated that along with the high requirements of students and graduates towards universities, universities' requirements for students themselves and their involvement should also increase. Higher education competitions should pay attention to the current expectations related to the increased emphasis on practical education. However, it is worth emphasizing that along with the emphasis on practical education they should not forget about their crucial role and independence is to educate intelligent, creative individuals with broad practicals. It is, therefore, essential to find a mean. Indeed, universities should strive to achieve their main primary: graduates' adequate preparation to perform a specific professional function.

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

**Ethical Approval** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the institutional and/or national research committee's ethical standards and the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

**Informed Consent** Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. All subjects of the institutional survey gave consent for anonymized data to be used for publication purposes.

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