



Promotank HQA

Evaluation of current higher education quality by employers in Kyrgyzstan

What employers think about current educational system and the quality of education of recent graduates

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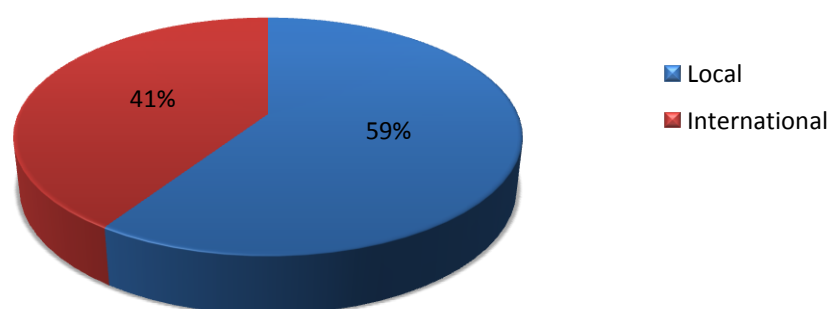
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GENERAL INFORMATION

The aim of the survey was to find out what employers think about current educational system and the quality of education of recent graduates. Survey was conducted in Bishkek and respondent companies were members of IBC. 62 companies participated in this research, 59% of which were local companies and the rest of them were international companies.

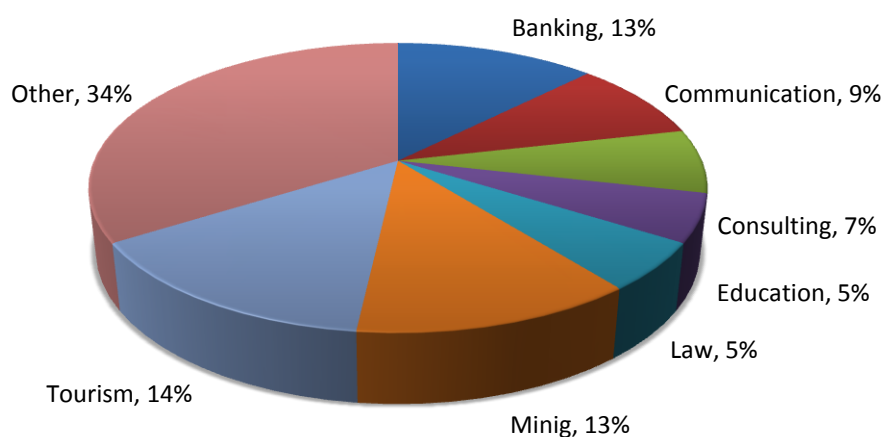
Local vs. International companies-respondents



TYPES OF COMPANIES

13% companies' area of business was banking, 9% - communication, 7% - consulting, 5% - education, 5% were law, 13% - mining, 14% - tourism, and 34% of companies were cargo, social service, IT, Mass media, audit, and hotel business.

Types of companies



STAFF QUANTITY

There are 3569 workers throughout all polled companies; the average quantity of workers in one company – 70, maximum quantity – 800 (bank), minimum quantity – 1 worker (tourism agency).



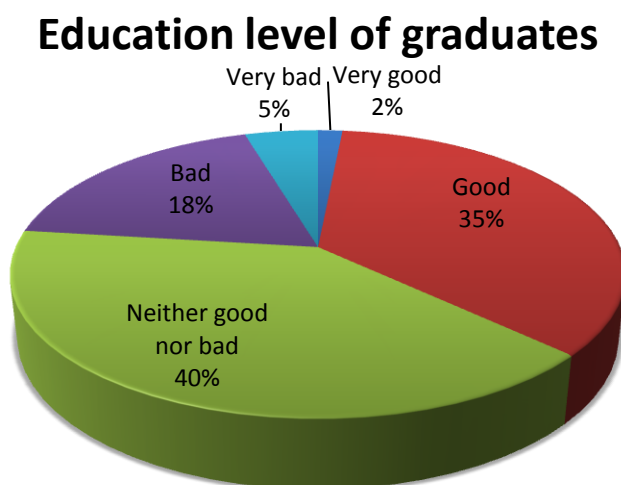
According to polling, all covered companies hired 983 new employees in 2006, the average amount is 17, maximum – 130.

EMPLOYERS ABOUT EDUCATION AND GRADUATES

One of the research's aims was to identify employers' attitude towards educational level of recent graduates, their understanding of high education itself and preferences for universities, major problems of educational system in Kyrgyz Republic, demanded specializations, and other issues.

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF GRADUATES

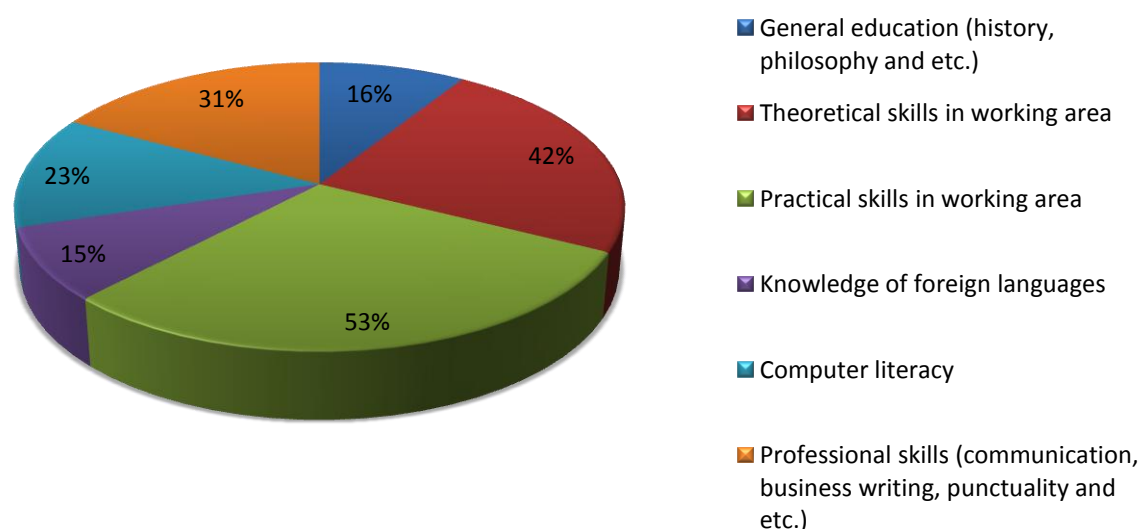
The research has shown that only 2% of companies think that educational level of recent graduates is very good and 35% percent think that it is good. The rest of respondents stated that the educational level of recent graduates is not proper.



WHAT DOES "HIGH EDUCATION" MEAN TO EMPLOYERS?

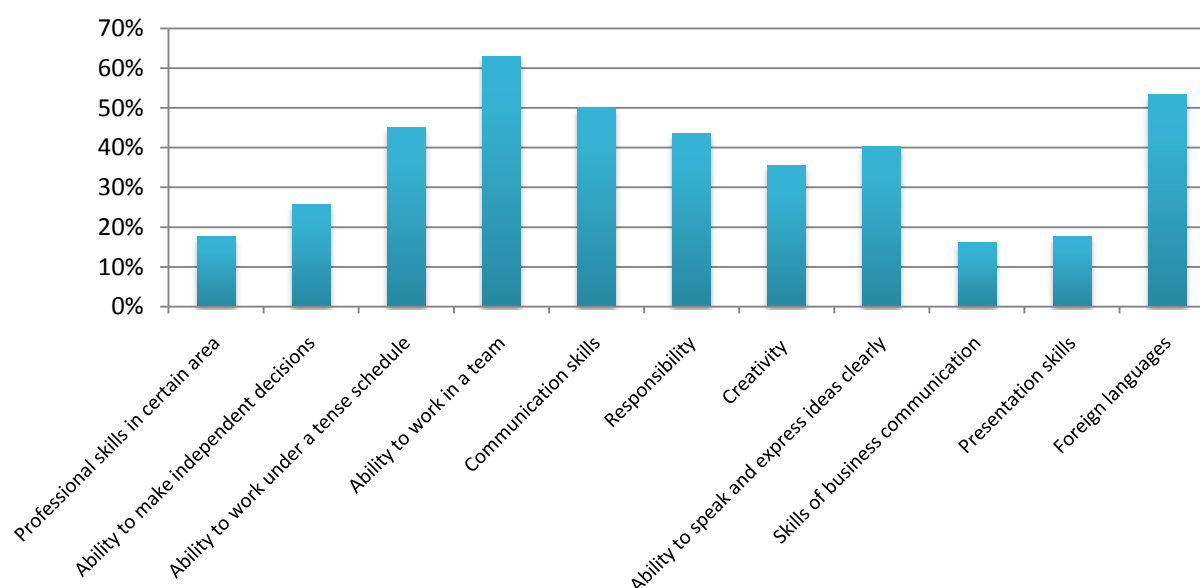
During the survey it was determined what high quality education means to employers. Most companies about 53% indicated that first of all education should include practical skills in certain area. Often recent graduates come to their job and do not know how to use their knowledge in order to be effective member of the company and it takes time to gain those skills. Over 40% of companies estimated that for high quality education theoretical skills in working area are also very important. Most employers advise students to study theory very hard, because when graduates start working they lack theoretical knowledge. Over 30% of companies also indicated professional skills as one of the major part of high quality education. From average opinion it was found out, that general education is the least important part of high quality education. Employers assumed that general education should be given at school and learning process at university must be more concentrated on other parts of education that were mentioned above.

What should high quality education include?



MEETING THE EMPLOYERS' REQUIREMENTS

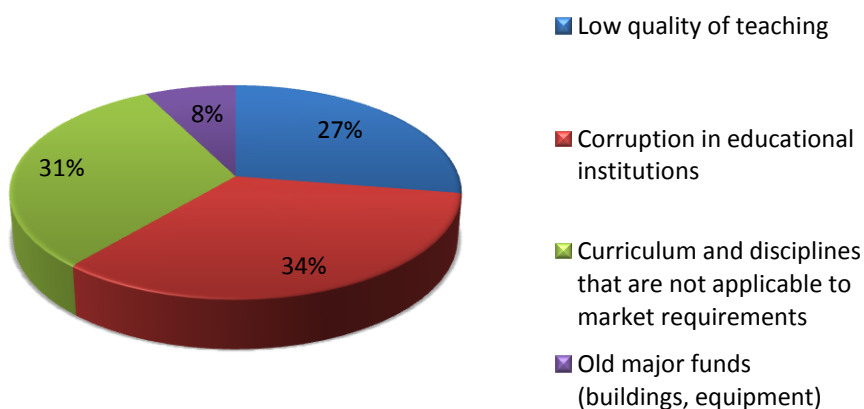
One of the major questions of survey was the question: "Estimate to what extent graduates meet the following requirements..." The survey has shown not encouraging results of how employers evaluate recent graduates' skills. Only 7% of interviewed employers evaluate recent graduates' abilities as "very good" and more than 60% of employers point out that recent university graduates' skills do not correspond to employers' requirements. So what skills do employers evaluate worst of all? Overwhelming majority of employers (more than 80%) does not find that recent graduates perform professional skills in the area, presentation skills and skills of business communication satisfactory. But as research has shown recent graduates have relatively good abilities to work in a team, communication skills and knowledge of foreign languages. It was also determined that recent graduates should be more responsible and creative, improve ability to speak and express ideas clearly. They should also learn to work under a tense schedule and develop independent thinking in order to become more effective employees.



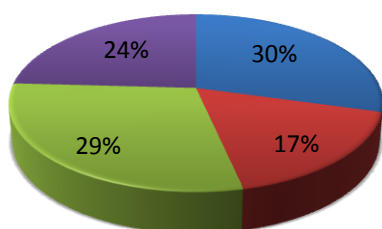
MAJOR PROBLEMS OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

During this research the major problems of educational system were found out. 33 % of respondent companies identified that problem number one in educational system in Kyrgyzstan is corruption in educational institutes. 29% of companies estimated that the second problem in educational system is that curriculum and disciplines in universities do not applicable for market requirements today. 24 % of companies estimated that the third problem in the educational system of Kyrgyzstan is low quality of teaching. Companies indicated that most universities lack of professional instructors. Also some companies responded that students are taught didactically and have little encouragement to develop analytical, creative and critical skills. Finally 64% of respondent companies identified that the fourth problem of educational system is old major funds. Many companies indicated that one of the major reasons of low-quality education and corruption in the universities is low payments for staff and ridiculously low stipends for students.

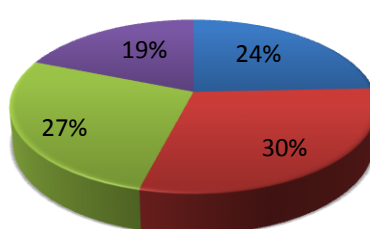
First place problem



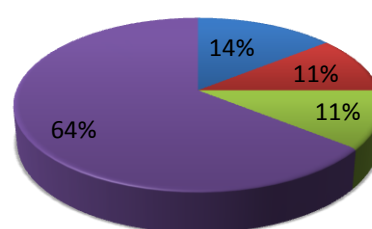
Second place problem



Third place problem



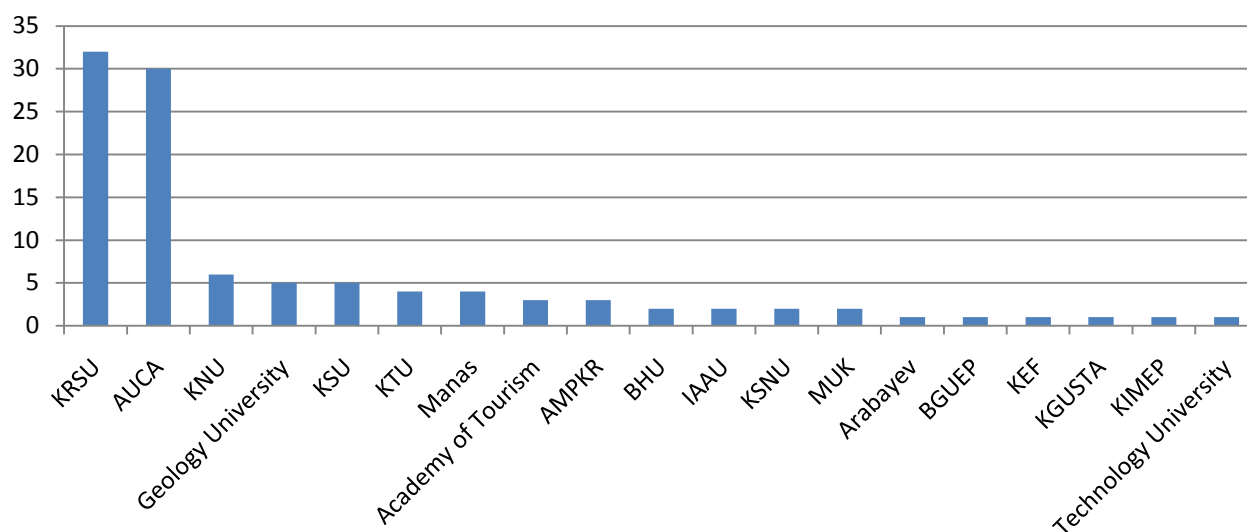
Fourth place problem



EMPLOYERS' PREFERENCES FOR CERTAIN UNIVERSITIES

One of the aims of this survey was also to find out from which universities companies prefer to hire employees and which universities give better education. As the research has shown the most qualified graduates are from KRSU, AUCA and KNU (KHY). Graduates from these universities have appropriate level of knowledge and relatively meet the requirements of the market. Interviewed employers also prefer to hire graduates from KTU, Manas, AMPKR (АУПІКР), IUK (MYK), Academy of Tourism, and others. Those companies whose area of business is mining prefer to hire graduates from Kyrgyz

Geology Institute, as these graduates have appropriate specialization in mining and exploration. Almost fifth of interviewed companies do not pay attention on university potential employees have finished. According to their comments, they hire employees on a basis of competition and first of all look at their motivation.



DEMANDED SPECIALIZATIONS

This research also helped to find out in what majors companies lack high-qualified employees. The chart shows that the most needed specializations (about 25%) are management and marketing. Over 15% of respondent companies indicated that they lack specialists in IT, service and engineering. Most companies indicated that there are a lot of graduates of management, finance and marketing, but the knowledge they obtain does not correspond to the requirements companies have.

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALIFICATIONS

It was found out that the most important qualifications graduates should have in order to be hired are responsibility (that graduates are lack of), appropriate work experience and skills in working area, knowledge of the foreign (especially English) and native (Russian and Kyrgyz) languages as well and ability to express ideas clearly. As most of the employers stated, appropriate diploma, abilities to work under a tense schedule, to make independent decisions and communication skills are greatly needed. What is not strongly required from the graduates is recommendations, presentation skills and skills of business communication. As it proved, our employers do not discriminate the graduates at all, so sex, age and marital status are determined as least important things employers look at while hiring. But at the same time they indicated that it is better when male is married, because he is more serious and responsible and when female is single is also better, cause she can work under tense schedule.

Most companies (91%) indicated practical skills as very important for students. They give an opportunity to students and graduates to do an internship at their companies. But it must be noted that not all companies (only 77%) use an internship of the students/graduates as a method of hiring new employees.

QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

Most employers pointed out that it would be helpful for graduates if they began to cooperate and work with companies being a student. Thus, graduating from the university they would be more experienced and prepared to work in the company. Companies stated that graduates when they start to work do not know anything and other staff members have to teach new employees what to do. Employers also stated that universities also should be involved and they should offer some courses studying where student will get practical experience. Also companies indicated that there is no interaction between Ministry of Education and local companies. They also stated that the Ministry of Education should learn labor market needs in order to have demand for graduates.

Employers stated that graduates do not know what they want from their life, they do not have any plan what they are going to do. But for them to know what they want will be very useful because they will know exactly where they want to work and whom they want to be.

Some companies stated that students do not want to study and think if they get diploma they will be hired by company. But it is their big mistake, because companies look at their theoretical and practical knowledge, professional skills. For some companies it is does not matter which university person graduated, if he/she fits their requirements the company will hire him/her.

Also students should be initiative and participate in different seminars and trainings. Students also should develop themselves. Most companies indicated that students do not English language well, but knowledge of language is very important today, also students should be computer literate and read more books on their specialization. Sometimes as companies stated graduates do not have elementary professional skills. Sometimes they are not punctual and responsible, also some graduates do not know what is ethical and unethical. Also they should be more self-confident.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this survey was to get know the companies opinion about current educational system and the quality of education of recent graduates. This research has shown that most companies do not think that academic level of recent graduates is good. Most companies stated that there are problems in educational system. These problems can be solved by all over efforts of universities, Ministry of Education and students. One of the major problems is low quality of teaching. Universities have a big problem of brain drain; they lack professional instructors very much. One of the problems is corruption, which can be solved if professors will earn much more money.

Graduates face some problems when they apply to job. 60% of companies pointed out that graduates' qualifications do not meet their requirements. Students should try to get experience during their study at university; also most students think that theory is not very important, but most employers said that recent graduates lack theory very much and at university students should study it very hard.

Even if companies indicated that do not pay much attention to university which person graduated, companies stated that most qualified graduates are from AUCA, KRSU and KSU.

In general respondent companies pointed out that in many respects students success depends on students themselves. Students should get more theoretical knowledge while studying and develop practical skills, to learn carefully languages and be more self-confident.