

University students seek more practical skills

In a large Bratislava supermarket, two of the seven cashiers on duty are young women with university degrees, as customers can see from the academic titles on their nametags. It is not that one needs a university degree in economics to be a cashier in Slovakia but rather that the two graduates have not been able to find jobs that better match their qualifications. While working as a cashier in a supermarket may be a better option than the unemployment office, human resources professionals say it is often a lack of practical experience that makes it difficult for new university graduates to find suitable jobs and that employers are often quite hesitant about hiring people who have just graduated.

“The biggest problem with graduates in general is their lack of practical experience, lack of working habits, personal immaturity and, at least in the past, exaggerated salary expectations,” Lucia Burianová of the Profesia job portal told The Slovak Spectator, adding that employers often prefer people with some on-the-job experience when looking to add to their staff.

In September, Slovakia’s national unemployment rate reached a 7-year high of 13.37 percent, according to the Labour, Social Affairs and Family Centre (ÚPSVAR). The growing number of university graduates without jobs are part of this high unemployment rate, with ÚPSVAR reporting that almost every third graduate under the age of 26 is currently jobless. The unemployment rate among college graduates has long hovered around 30 percent and the unemployment rate for graduates from vocational high schools is even higher, at 32 percent, according to ÚPSVAR.

According to Profesia, there are certain job positions where 60 percent of the employees have qualifications higher than is required for the work they are currently performing. The job portal reported that 60 percent of those working as mortgage loan advisers have an educational level higher than required, and that is the case also among 58 percent of those working in journalism and 55 percent working as advisers at municipalities.

If employers do not hire the available number of university graduates, then some of those individuals with higher education are likely to take jobs that require only the skills of a secondary school education.

František Palko, the director of the Economic Policy Institute, told the TASR newswire that the quality and amount of university education is not in harmony with the needs of the labour

market and long-term communication between educational institutions and employers has not existed in Slovakia.

Human resources professionals have noted that employers no longer look strictly at graduates' diplomas when filling certain positions, other than for those occupations that are highly technical or are in the medical field. A recurrent complaint among employers is that students do not receive a sufficient amount of practical training in school and they are not able to function efficiently in their first jobs. And university students studying economics also say they are not satisfied with the amount of practical training they receive from their schools.

http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/44575/12/university_students_seek_more_practical_skills.html