

POST-UNIVERSITY FOLLOW-UP OF GRADUATES IN DISTANCE LEARNING FORMAT

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ABSTRACT

The article proves the necessity of post-university support of graduates of transport universities and the expediency of remote interaction with former students at the stage of their adaptation to industrial environment. The importance and forms of post-university contact with graduates are shown, the problem of finding internal

university resources for organizing the continuation of their knowledge acquisition using electronic network communications is posed. Thus, the system task is realized, concerning the concept of continuous education, and at the same time the question of basic recruitment and successive renewal of competencies for a recent graduate is being solved.

Keywords: *transport university, professional training, personnel development, basic competencies, forms of post-university support of graduates, remote intellectual support, post-university informal distance learning, continuous education.*

Background. Professional training of personnel for modern transport organizations assumes the formation of professional and personal competencies that provide graduates with the opportunity to professionally perform their professional duties in the enterprise for at least five years. However, the requirements for staff and working conditions for employees in transport organizations, including railways, are changing very quickly today:

- the amount of information received and mastered by employees increases daily;
- technical, technological and software support of production processes become obsolete and change rapidly;
- the official requirements for staff, as well as the amount of work performed by personnel change rapidly and increase constantly;
- the professional risks and the scale of the destructiveness of the consequences of nonoperative, incorrect or erroneous actions of personnel increase [4];
- sociocultural requirements for the personnel from the consumers of transport services (appearance, labor discipline, business communications) increase;
- the forms of communication between the personnel and customers change, the psychological stress on personnel increases;
- social expectations and demands (sociocultural, communicative, ethical, aesthetic, everyday) among colleagues grow;
- contemporary economic factors (instability and crisis phenomena in the economy, high wear and tear on equipment and transport networks, poor development of transport infrastructure, competition between types of transport services, etc.) exert considerable pressure on the activities of the staff.

There are many publications, which concern the listed and other features of staff activities in transport organizations [1, 3–5, 7]. At the same time, the practical implementation of the concepts of lifelong learning and development of personnel remains an urgent direction of work with the personnel of transport organizations, an obligatory component of the management system of these organizations.

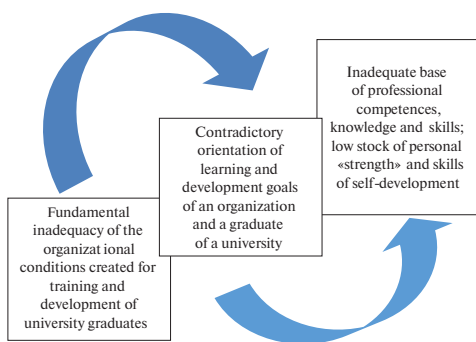
Successful implementation of training and development programs for staff in modern Russian organizations in relation to graduates is hampered by a number of reasons.

Firstly, organizations are focused on (if possible) accelerated training of recent graduates to provide them with minimum necessary practical skills. Graduates of the university are also interested in this,

but in fact they have a completely different orientation: until the end of the university and employment, during the 16–18 years of their life they were mainly aimed at the wide-scale development of personal (intellectual, professional, communicative, other) abilities and skills. It is not surprising that they experience the state of «development stopped at full gallop». And taking into account the impact of the uncertainty factor (very few of the graduates immediately after the graduation are absolutely sure of the correct choice of profession, position and organization) and the fear of incompetence, many of the graduates demonstrate a sharp decline in productivity, called «regressive behavior» in psychology. Therefore, during the first year of adaptation in the organization, many graduates have an acute need for intellectual, professional, psychological support from Alma mater, and meanwhile personal contacts and communication with the graduating department, the scientific leader, favorite teachers and fellow students are sometimes completed at the last qualifying event (state examination, defense of diploma thesis), or at diploma delivery ceremony.

In general, not only in transport organizations, but also in the wider field – in the management of personnel in Russia, there has been an erroneous identification of the function of personnel training and the function of personnel development, which is partly due to the fact that often these functions are performed by the same human resource manager (engineer) and that the function of personnel development in many Russian organizations began to be realized relatively recently. It is necessary to take into account that personnel training assumes that employees receive some knowledge, skills and abilities, while the development of personnel is aimed at obtaining new competencies, qualitatively different (or of a higher level) knowledge and skills. Therefore, staff development is a more complex organizational process that requires significant efforts on the part of the staff being developed, as well as on the part of management personnel. Therefore, the development of the organization's personnel shall mean not just a course of lectures or short-term courses, but «a set of activities aimed at increasing the professional and managerial competence of the company's personnel for more effective achievement of the organization's goals and objectives». This «steady, continuous process of improving the professional and personal qualities of employees, which in modern conditions makes it possible to improve their work, prepares an employee for performance of new production functions, new jobs, new tasks» [3, p. 131]. In our opinion, university graduates have a great need to get





Pic. 1. Three main reasons for ineffectiveness of corporate training programs and development of new staff – university graduates.

support in their personal (and professional) development.

Secondly, the low effectiveness of continuing education and staff development programs is associated with the fundamental inadequacy of the organizational conditions created for this purpose. This is especially true for staff development, since it is more variable in terms of direction, forms and methods used than in training, and as a rule requires regulatory changes in the organization – legalization (organizational legitimization) of the flexibility of personnel management and even some deviation from standard procedures with an impact on personnel, in particular, procedures of monitoring the process and the outcome of staff development.

Employee's development is a complex activity that requires significant time expenditures, for example, the introduction (with preservation of wages) of a shorter working week; allocation of a «library» day or a day for work on their own project; organization of «local» business trips; allocation of special time during the working day to learn new information and share work experience. Similar «privileges» in relation to new employees – university graduates of higher school simply do within within become habitual «full load» schemes of beginners. Therefore, the graduates of the university need an operative, easily organized, accessible information support and organizational legitimization of their relationship with the university, where they were trained.

Thirdly, the lack of a base of professional skills and knowledge, as well as a low level of personal «strength» and skills of self-development, is becoming a serious problem for some recent graduates. It is not a secret that in modern Russian universities the fundamental disciplines of the social and humanitarian cycle take up a small amount, and too much attention is paid to educational work. Faced with the first difficulties at work, yesterday's graduate sometimes seeks to continue his full-time education under any plausible pretext: master's programs, second higher education, Ph.D. studies, ABM, foreign language courses, schools of business communication or personal growth, etc.

Since a graduate of a university cannot come to the organization with the full necessary stock of knowledge, skills and abilities (in order to achieve such results, a drastic change in the vocational training system is required), he must be armed with a minimum sufficient base of professional skills, knowledge and skills and possess well-developed competencies and potential of

self-development. The importance of forming a cluster of factors that include «abilities, personal qualities, knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for a person in the course of work processes» is indicated by many Russian and foreign researchers [2].

Universities are not always able to fully solve this task in the process of professional training due to inattention of the heads of areas of vocational training to similar post-university problems after graduating, chronic shortage of classroom hours or free rooms, established teaching traditions and some other reasons. To help fill this gap is quite possible within the framework of post-university support of graduates.

Objective. The objective of the author is to consider Post-University Support of Graduates in Distance Learning Format

Methods. The author uses general scientific methods, comparative analysis, social evaluation, scientific description.

Results. In order that graduates successfully cope both with the tasks of adaptation in the organization, and with the «challenges» of the market and profession, universities are obliged to provide some help to their graduates. Worldwide, there is a tendency to improve the quality of educational services provided. Educational services are classified as expensive and long-term. Therefore, certain post-university support of graduates, a kind of «service maintenance» is not just a beautiful «feature» in an attractive university brand, it is a modern trend of successful business development.

It is advisable to carry out post-university support of graduates in a remote format, since distance interaction is:

- available: modern university graduates have wide access to the Internet network and demonstrate a high willingness to accept various technical conditions and modes of electronic interaction;
- variable: the content of information is easily updated;
- promptly and easily provides feedback;
- for the university is financially relatively inexpensive, since all university sites work on a permanent basis.

There are three main directions of post-university support of graduates: post-university corporate support for graduates; post-university distance intellectual support and post-university informal distance learning (see table 1).

Guidelines and programs of post-university informal distance education of graduates ideally should be determined taking into account the capabilities of university teachers, as well as the interests and needs of graduates for each academic year, if possible, making them diverse and periodically changing. In this regard, it should be emphasized that post-university socio-cultural development is in demand by people with higher education the more, the less they touched on this subject in the process of university education and the wider the prospects for professional and career growth that open before them.

A certain experience in the implementation of distance learning programs is available in some foreign and Russian universities. As an example, the so-called «inter-faculty courses» organized at Lomonosov Moscow State University can be cited. For example, in the spring semester of 2013–2014 academic year, 154 inter-faculty courses were organized [6]. The number and composition of enrolled and graduated from the courses largely

Table 1

Modern forms of post-university support of graduates

Post-university corporate support	Post-university distance intellectual support	Post-university informal distance learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• organization of distance work of the alumni club;• organization of meetings of graduates;• publication of vacancy announcements in the university and industry;• informing about the participation of the university in job fairs, assistance in the employment of graduates;• informing about newly opened directions of vocational training and activity of the university;• organization of charitable projects and volunteer activities for graduates in conjunction with students, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• free access to all programs of the university website (at least one year after graduation);• providing information support and sending e-mail to graduates of the university news and official personal invitations to university events;• formation of special offers for the graduates by the graduating departments in order to participate in permanent scientific and practical seminars and annual scientific conferences;• organization of professional forums for graduates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• informing about innovations in professional activities and professional standards;• prompt informing about changes in legislation and regulatory framework;• organization of various cultural programs and Internet events;• organization of lectures (cultural, religious, philosophical, worldview, linguistic and other lectures and cycles);• sending out to graduates new publications of scientists and teachers of the university.

depends on its thematic focus, the level of preparedness of trainees and the possibility of obtaining official certificates. This experience can well be used in the practice of post-university support of graduates of transport universities.

With regard to the problems of organizing post-university distance learning programs, the main ones, in our opinion, are: the possibility of organizing relatively short-term programs, certifying the directions of distance learning of graduates, as well as searching for university resources and sponsors for financing. Therefore, the proposal for organization of post-university informal distance education programs for graduates is:

- almost in-demand by graduates of universities;
- realistic, comparatively quickly organized: at first it can be implemented on a minimum scale, which does not require significant financial investments and organizational efforts;
- providing opportunities for broader feedback and business cooperation, at least with the most active graduates.

Conclusion. The useful results and «winnings» of post-university support of graduates, in addition to formation of higher corporate solidarity should include: formation of reputational advantages; shaping out of a strong organizational culture and development of new traditions; «promotion» of the brand; expansion of the scope and improvement of the quality of educational services; social development of an educational institution and a better implementation of its mission and social functions.

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