



## Alternatives of how to prepare for the future labor market

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### Introduction

From time immemorial, one of the crucial questions of mankind has been what the future has in store for us. The future, however, has remained unfathomable up to this day, and even future studies promises only as much as prognosticating what is likely to continue and what will plausibly change in the world. Thus, no wonder, that already the first “real” economists of the 18th century (Adam Smith et al.) considered the creation of the future model of labor economy as a challenge. At the present era of modern labor market, this task is closely connected with the future status of labor market since in a consumer society income acquired by work forms the basis of satisfying needs (Ehrenberg – Smith 2003, Galasi 1994).

We are not saying anything new by stating the fact that the demand for labor force is determined by new places of work and that an ideal supply of labor force must be adaptable to the requirements of demand. To meet requirements and to be adaptable is possible only if we are armed with the necessary competencies and capital (Hodges – Burchell 2003, Bourdieu 1998). The question, to what extent students in higher education are prepared for changes in the demand for labor force, arises at this point. What can young people expect on the labor market in this ever changing world? What kind of job opportunities and work conditions are there for them, and how much are they prepared to face these changes?

In this study, we do not wish to engage in the diverse field of futurology (cf. Nováki 1994, Nováki 1997, Nováki 2005); our primary aim is rather to call the attention of the young generation to the future development of labor force demand, while relying on the most significant results of two studies in futurology. Our further aim is to call attention to the importance of continuous studying because it makes it possible for the job seeker on the labor market to obtain extra capital as well as to become adaptable to the future requirements of labor force demand. Finally, we are going to present the results of an international research which renders information about the expectations of students in higher education of their first future work place.



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### **Trends of labor market changes**

In recent decades, the structure of employment has gone through significant changes: while at the beginning of the 20th century, industrial workplaces predominated, since the 1950s, service industry has taken over. One of its main reasons is the automation of work including technical development, Taylorism, as well as the introduction of information technologies, as a result of which, machines replace men especially in manual labor (Giddens 2008). With companies whose main aim is to achieve growth and effectiveness, this is a sensible decision, because the taxes and benefits adding to the expense of human labor were continuously increasing as a result of the spread of welfare systems. In more developed parts of the world, this tendency is reinforced by possibilities created by globalization, since transferring production to less developed countries where labor force expenses are much lower, is becoming easier and easier. As a result of the above-mentioned information-communication revolution, automation has also reached the tertian sector by now: we can more and more often come across self-service cash-machines, food and drink dispensers, online ticket selling systems and web shops. Taking all this into consideration, we can expect a more rapid increase of unemployment as a result of the growing number of economic crises.

In accordance with market laws, the growing supply entails stronger competition even on the labor market. This leads to the erosion of workplace security. Employers offer fixed-(and shorter and shorter)-term work contracts in place of the unfixed-term ones (Castel 1998). Moreover, as a result of the fast changing environment, a significant portion of developments and investments is realized in the form of projects (Czibere – Kovách 2013). Consequently, the widespread use of projects—based on fixed time limits—spreads over to the labor market.

These tendencies lead to the further segmentation of the labor market, to the spread of atypical forms of employment, as well as to the reappearance of self-employment instead of wage labor, all of which foreshadow the formation of an entirely new labor market environment (Giddens 2008).

### **Workplaces of the future**

In recent years, several significant researches and studies have been carried out in connection with future workplaces and work opportunities (cf. ISS 2020 Vision 2013, Morgan 2014), of which we are presenting relevant information from the results of two, which can help us to understand this new environment.



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In the first study, which was made by the Fast Future Research futurology company<sup>1</sup> in 2010, predictions are made about occupations which do not even exist today, for the next twenty years, with the aim of giving assistance to the future generation in their career choice, as well as of defining the course of the transformation of education systems. According to the authors, these occupations will be influenced by the development of the digital world, by the protection of the environment, by attending to the needs of an aging society, and by satisfying the requirements of commercial space travels. On the basis of these—with no intention to be exhaustive—the following occupations seem to be the most likely to occur: space travel guide, long-distance surgeon, data trash operator, time broker, personal trademark constructor, networking social worker, re-forester, garbage re-designer, nostalgist, and quarantine officer.

Apart from these, some already existing occupations are predicted to come to the forefront, such as e.g. wellness advisors or alternative vehicle constructors. That is to say, a so-called 10/7 rule will come into effect: out of ten kindergarten pupils, 7 will have an occupation which does not exist yet. Furthermore, the next generation will change their workplace 12 times on average. Education systems, therefore, will have to develop suitable learning abilities and possibilities including informal and lifelong learning (The shape of jobs to come 2010).

The second study was made by the Ericsson Networked Society Lab,<sup>2</sup> and was published with the title “The next generation working—survival guide 2013. On the basis of interviews made with human resources personnel, chief engineers, organizational experts, and economists, they advise the following to future employees:

- Keep rebuilding yourself. Skills and knowledge appealing to the labor market change continually. Occupations which are the most popular nowadays had not existed 10 years ago. The level of general qualification is becoming higher globally, which means that it is not enough to have just one degree. To be successful, you have to act according to the philosophy of continuous learning. That’s what life is about!
- Learn self-marketing!
- Keep searching for something better—go from one project or job to another! The workplace of the future is not about settling in one job because it is safe or easy. Those who achieve success in their new environment should keep looking for new possibilities which may provide a better chance of reward, development, and challenge (The Next Generation Working Life—A survival Guide 2013).

<sup>1</sup> See in more detail: <http://fastfuture.com/>

<sup>2</sup> See in more detail: [http://www.ericsson.com/thinkingahead/networked\\_society](http://www.ericsson.com/thinkingahead/networked_society)



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These studies—relating to the tendencies presented in the previous chapter—predict a labor force environment which is much more flexible than the present one and, in which, opinions and expectations about work also change even if, for the time being, not as radically as an American futurologist foresees it: *“You might be driving Uber part of the day, renting out your spare bedroom on Airbnb a little bit, renting out space in your closet as storage for Amazon, doing delivery for Amazon or housing the drone that does delivery for Amazon”* (Rohit 2015).

Consequently, the three priorities of the *“Europe 2020 Strategy”* are intelligent growth (based on knowledge and innovation), sustainability, and social cohesion. One of the most important means to achieve these goals is raising the qualification level of the European population. As a result, it will be possible to achieve a leading role in the competition within knowledge-based industries (Adler 2011). This will require learning new skills and competencies, from future employees.

### **The importance of capital investment**

The demand side of labor market requires considerable capital investment from the participant. Such an investment is, in the first place, participation in education and vocational training, mobility, and the search for a new workplace. Capital investment entails expenses in most cases: (1) expense covered directly or paid from pocket; (2) unpaid salary; (3) in the form of psychic losses (Ehrenberg – Smith 2003). The question what capital the social actor, the student in higher education proper, can invest, may arise, as they do not, in general, have any capital. It is not economic capital that seems to be necessary to prepare for the labor market of the future. What one should possess is the convertible capital of knowledge and connections which can be transformed, with conscious effort, into economic capital. At this point, we should look at types of capital since understanding them can be conducive to the recognition of the importance of continuous learning.

### **Types of capital—with special emphasis on social capital**

According to a classic representative of this subject, Bourdieu (1998), it is position fulfilled in a given social space that gives rise to expectations and efforts towards which the activities of the social actor are directed. The basis of individual strategies is formed by these ideas and efforts or, rather, by the self-interpretation of the individual. Self-interpretation, in this context, means the place occupied in social space. This place is defined by the amount and composition of the various economic, cultural and social forms of capital.



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Taking Bourdieu's interpretation into consideration, we can define anything as economic capital that can be converted into money; cultural capital ensuring further success through the family; and social capital born from social relations of various magnitude and intensity (Bourdieu 1998). According to another approach, economic capital is defined as material or physical capital, and cultural capital as human capital, where evidence of the existence of capital is provided by the skills and qualification of the individual (Coleman 1994). Similarly to Bourdieu (1998), Coleman (1994) mentions such existing networks of relations which are connected to acquaintances and various relations of mutual acknowledgment. Coleman's definition of social capital, however, offers more as it also mentions resources based on belonging to one group. These resources enhance the importance and force of the social capital in accordance with the power of norms within the group as well as the structural stability of social relations and interactions. Social capital is a shared characteristic of the network of relations of people cooperating in the system of social trading (Coleman 1990). It is important to emphasize that social capital is also productive, that is, it makes the achievement of otherwise seemingly unattainable goals possible. In contrast with other forms of capital, social capital appears in the structure of relations between actors, that is, it cannot be found either in the actors or in the material means of production (Coleman 1994, 1998).

Bourdieu defines the network of relations as an investment strategy where, in addition to the creation and sustenance of unconscious social relations, an indirect profit can also be expected. Lin (1999) offers a similar definition when he talks about investment hoped for from profits inherent in the notion of social capital.

In connection with social capital, Putnam (2004) holds the view that social relations are the most important determinants of a fulfilled life. He connects marriage and joining a given community to extra income and he considers their absence or incompleteness as the loss of social capital, which can lead to crises. Putnam (2000), in his famous work, shows playing bowling alone, as a social process, and places special emphasis on the examination of social capital. He is of the opinion that our reserve of capital and network of relations have fallen apart, which influences our life and our micro- and macro-communities in a negative way. In other words, we even play bowling alone. The process of social isolation is affected by work, the composition of the family, suburban life, the widespread use of TV and computer, as well as the emancipation of women, etc. Our access to social capital—which is communal activity and participation—is becoming more and more limited, which imperils our civilian and personal health as well. Coleman (1990) thinks positively about access to social capital: he finds the potential of information inherent in social networks of relations an important component of social capital.

Putnam (2004) also states that in communities with less social capital, educational results are lower. It stands close to Fukuyama's (2000) approach, which also holds growing individualism responsible for the decline of moral norms and values,



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especially in relation to the lessening of the role of civil society. According to Putnam (2004), social networks are valuable, that is, they can serve as important resources for individuals, groups, and communities. He calls social capital a civil virtue when he alludes to relations between individuals and the networks developing from them, as well as the principles of mutuality operating these networks.

According to Csizmadia (2002), two key elements of Putnam's concept of social capital is confidence and mutuality, which ensure social cooperation for mutual advantages in almost every area of social existence.

Wellman et al. (2001), relying on Putnam's concept, divide social capital into two components and supplement them with a third dimension:

1. Network capital: interactions between friends, neighbors or colleagues which can give emotional, physical support or help.

2. Participation capital: it represents the wish, capability and willingness to join political and voluntary organizations.

3. Commitment to communities: shows interpersonal relations and their motivations, as well as the wish to belong somewhere (Wellman 2001).

Considering these various and often overlapping or supplementary approaches towards social capital, we can see that in them, the concept of social capital is based on a clear and reasonable line of thoughts. The definition of social capital as capital implies the hypothesis that social networks can be regarded as resources for individuals and communities. Consequently, social capital is a type of resources that can be created and utilized only through networks.

The utilization of capital means to Putnam (2004) that communities and societies can realize aims which could not be realized or sustained in a stable way, or only with difficulty, without social capital. Last but not least, we find it important to remark that Putnam views social capital as a convertible type of resources. Bourdieu (1998) also uses a similar notion.

Thus, social capital contributes to the sustainable economic and social development of communities of various social organizational levels as well as to the utilizations of their resources. We are convinced that this is the kind of capital to which the wide range of electronic communicational space—cyberspace—such as Facebook or LinkedIn etc. not only serve every young person as lifebelts, but it can also be a potential on the labor market of both the present and the future.

### **The importance of continuous learning**

In what follows, we would like to support the argument for continuous learning by emphasizing the necessity of lifelong learning based on the human capital investment model. The concept of lifelong learning is a widespread one. Does this mean that the "citizens" of the world are not satisfied with many years of learning



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and, therefore, continue their studies? This may be true, but what it actually indicates is that in our fast changing and developing world we need to get education besides formal schooling or in an unorganized way in order to keep pace with our social environment. This is what is called life-long learning—as a concept—but its idea and content goes back to the 17th century, when Comenius formulated the idea of lifelong learning (cf. Harangi 2004). Moreover, the importance of self-development had been recognized even by ancient thinkers (Harangi 2002).

It was in the 1960s that lifelong learning became the subject of debates and even of studies with the present meaning and, many times, identified with adult education or treated as make-up for missed formal education. Accordingly, a lot of people obtained their primary or secondary school certificates within adult education, and sat by school desks after finishing work for the day.

Nowadays, this concept is used in a wider sense: Philip H. Coombs, commissioned by the UNICEF, started to implement school reforms in the 1970s, and created the three concepts of formal, non-formal and informal education (Simon 2009).

We are right to think that the obvious cause of continuous learning lies in the present performance-oriented labor market, which can accept or turn us down in an instant. This can depend on the existence or lack of qualification. Apart from this—as human capital investment plays an important role in the labor force's achievement of success on the market (cf. Ehrenberg – Smith 2003)—we often acquire new skills and competencies or documented qualifications of our own will by means of formal or informal education.

### **Alternatives on the labor market - notes on a research**

The future development of the labor market is determined, to a large extent, by how we view it in the present, and by what kind of expectations and ideas we have about it (Morgan 2014). On the basis of the findings of an international survey, we can learn about the ideas of college graduates of their first future workplace.

The Trendence Graduate Barometer 2015<sup>3</sup> research examines, in connection with college graduates, as follows:

- First workplace after finishing studies
- Students' ideas of employers
- Some important forms of the media
- Strengths and weaknesses of employers
- Opinions on institutes of higher education

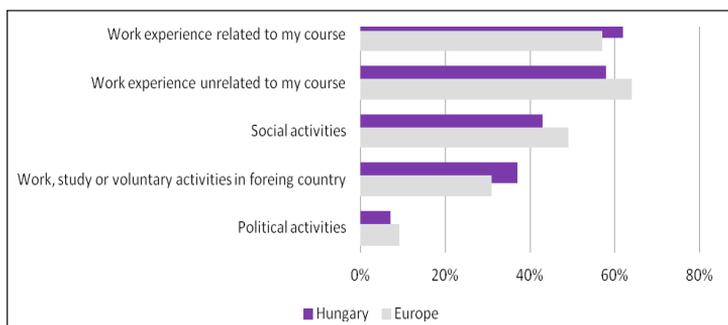
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<sup>3</sup> This research is carried out in 952 institutes of higher education of 24 European countries, on a 281.000-strong model on average, as an online survey; the Hungarian model in between October 2014 and February 2015 was 11.800 strong.

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This research offers a wide range of information on, among others, the work experience of the Hungarian youth and of those of other European nationalities who also study at institutes of higher education; on their command of foreign languages; and on their career priorities in relation to their first place of work. We can also learn about their willingness for mobility, their expectations concerning their salary, and their opinion about the extent to which higher education is adjusted to the requirements of the labor market.

1. Graph: Student's work experience (%)



Source: Trendence Graduate Barometer 2015 Research

The first graph (1) shows how work done besides studying is related to studying. On the basis of the graph, it can be stated that the Hungarian youth have more opportunities to do work which is related to their field of study, during their college years, than what the European average is.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, voluntary work is also done with more frequency in our country. As far as social and political activities are concerned, the Hungarian youth, however, fall short.

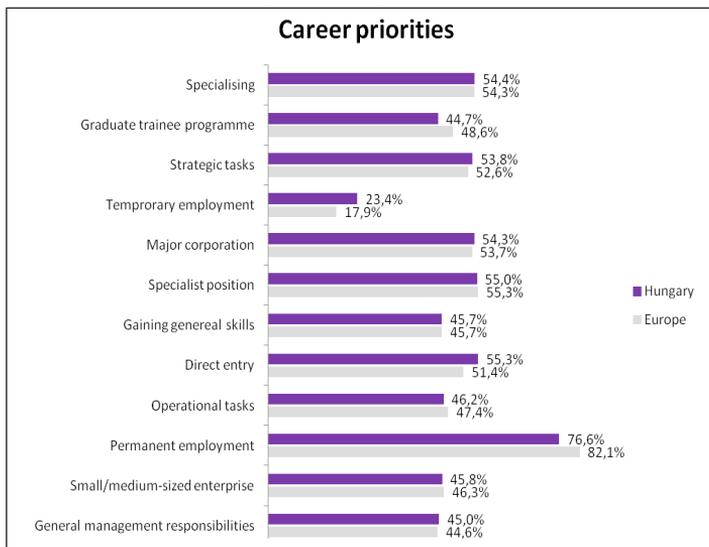
Working besides studying—regardless of whether it is paid or voluntary unpaid work—proves to be an excellent form of capital investment as it contributes to the strengthening of the tendencies of continuous learning. Concerning foreign language knowledge, 50 per cent of the interviewed people do not speak any foreign languages apart from Hungarian, which can be a serious drawback on the future labor market (cf. Morgan 2014).

<sup>4</sup> When examining work done besides studying at a university, Szócs found that student work related to their field of study occurred with low frequency on the Hungarian regional model (2013, 2014).



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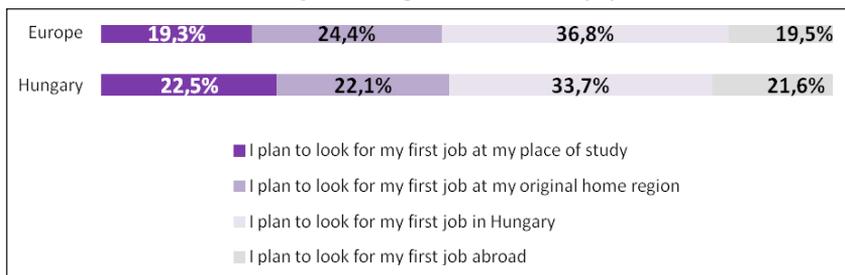
2. Graph: career priorities (%)



Source: Trendence Graduate Barometer 2015 Research

Graph 2 shows the graduates' expectations of workplace, more precisely, that most of them do not so much expect the development of general skills as of special ones after starting working immediately, and not after taking part in trainee programs. According to the Trendence research, it is permanent employment, major corporations and specialist position that stand close to the ideas of the Hungarian youth.

3. Graph: Willingness to relocate (%)



Source: Trendence Graduate Barometer 2015 Research

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It is worth noting that while their willingness for mobility is considerably strong, one fifth of the graduates would like to have their first workplace in a university town or in their native region, and the same number of graduates would like to work abroad. Overrepresented are those graduates who would like to find work in their native country. Graph 4 shows the expected income per country:

4. Graph: Expected gross annual salary vs. Expected working hours relationship in Europe (€ /hrs)



Source: Trendence Graduate Barometer 2015 Research

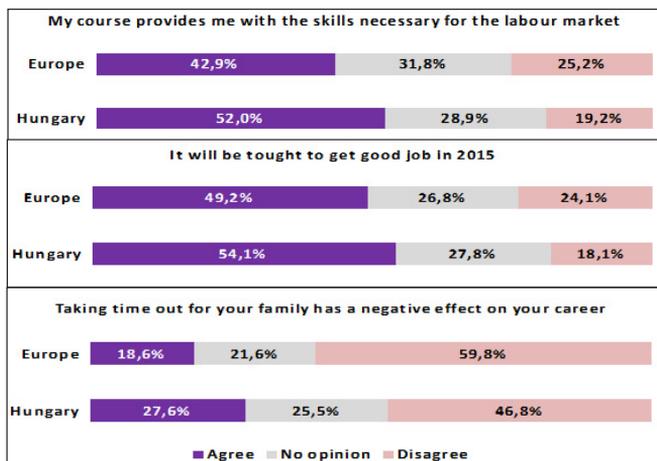
According to the research results, graduates studying in European institutes of higher education are usually familiar with salaries to be expected in their own country. Thus, the graph gives a reliable demonstration of the differences in gross income in the European countries, amongst which the Central European Countries (Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia), stand at the bottom line with an annual 10 thousand euro or lower income, and with 40 to 42 working hours per week. The upper income limit has been defined between 45 and 65 thousand euros by Swiss, Danish, Norwegian and German graduates, with 43 to 45 working hours per week.

A higher number of Hungarian graduates than the European average think that their studies provide them with the necessary labor market skills and that it will be difficult for them to find work (graph 5).



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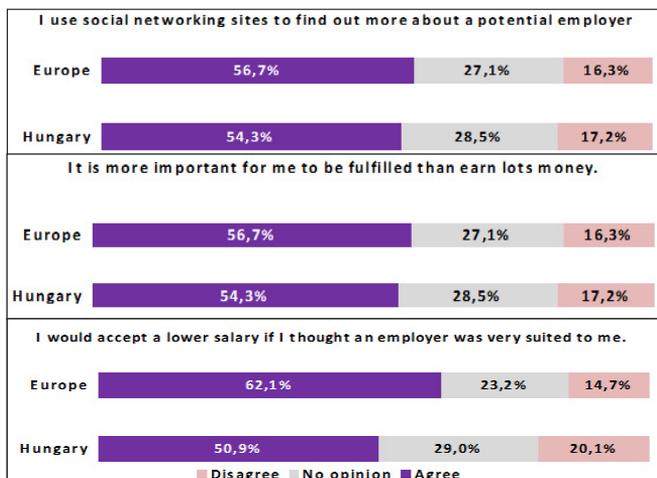
5. Graph: Student opinions (%)



Source: Trendence Graduate Barometer 2015 Research

Graduates think that time devoted to their family does not have a negative effect on their career. At the same time, the number of those giving a positive answer to this question is also worth considering, which outlines the image of the inward turning individual presented in the ISS Vision (2013): amongst Hungarian graduates, there is a higher index of the negative effect of family on career.

6. Graph: Student opinions 2. (%)



Source: Trendence Graduate Barometer 2015 Research



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Graph 6 shows results differing from general opinions: it is more important for graduates to perform well at their workplaces than to earn a lot of money, as has been shown by Morgan (2014). Most of the interviewed graduates search for potential employers on websites, which helps them to find a job quickly on entering the labor market. They naturally find the amount of their salary important, although if they find a suitable employer, they are willing to take the “favored” job for less money. There is a significant difference, in this respect, between the European average and the Hungarian graduates: the latter are more money-oriented than the European average. We should not, though, look at it as a problem since the results can also reveal future ideas. On the basis of a longitudinal research by Altorjai – Róbert (2006), we can, however, see that instrumental (money-oriented) employment does not entail income benefits.<sup>5</sup>

### Summary

Research carried out into the workplaces of the future call attention to the importance of the continuous capital investment of job seekers since, in our faster and faster world, even popular qualifications do not provide security on the labor market. The researchers of the Ericsson Networked Society Lab find knowledge, competence, self-management and motivation necessary to find better employment (The Next Generation Working Life—A Survival Guide 2013). We can conclude, on the basis of the Tredence Graduate Barometer 2015 Research, that Hungarian graduates still have to develop in this respect.

All three capitals defined by Bourdieu can be developed further by working and studying at the same time: the economic capital will grow as a result of the acquired salary. Learning about various conflicts, problems, and life situations means important knowledge to fit in with a new workplace. The growth of network capital—familiarity with the company and decision makers—can mean concrete job offers for graduates. It is reassuring that more Hungarian graduates can do work related to their qualifications than the European average and that their qualifications ensure skills required on the labor market. The results of the Hungarian Youth 2012 research, however, shows that only one third of graduates do some kind of works besides studying (Gazsó 2013).

Although we have reached the European average concerning the index of mobility, we still cannot talk about a successful acquisition of self-management as long as there are rigid salary requirements. It is to be hoped that our graduates’

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<sup>5</sup> Altorjai – Róbert (2006) distinguished two work attitudes when examining the changes of human capital investment in Hungary between 1989 and 2005: 1. instrumental (money-oriented) 2. committed (value-oriented).



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thirst for knowledge will grow and that they will make bigger efforts to widen their knowledge. By this, their interest in starting an enterprise may grow on recognizing their possibilities. The workplace of the future requires convertible knowledge and flexible individuals (Morgan 2014). It is worth offering more and more alternatives to our youth in order that they can get successfully prepared for the labor market of the future.

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