

More money to support employment, not subways

By Wu Xiaobo

Recently I was invited to the graduation ceremony at my alma mater, Fudan University, to give a speech.

I knew I wasn't helping. It's all well and good to give advice but for the 3,000 graduates in front of me, the biggest help one can offer is a job.

This year the employment situation looks dire for college graduates, according to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

Among the 6.1 million graduates, the employment rate by the end of May is only 45 percent, 3 percentage points less than same time last year.

Unemployment upon graduation is a social issue. Too many idle people could become a burden and risk to the whole society.

To help these students find jobs, we need to first help their

Too many idle people could become a burden and risk to the whole society.

potential employers. Who's hiring now? Mostly private enterprises, which account for 80 percent of employment. This sector has great potential.

How to help private enterprises? I think we can learn from Hong Kong. The Special Administrative Region government recently announced an "Internship Program for University Graduates." The government set aside around HK\$140 million (\$18.06 million) and will provide about 4,000 internship positions, 3,000 in Hong Kong and the others in the mainland.

Graduates who intern in Hong Kong are paid no less than HK\$4,000 (\$516) per

month and the employers can apply for a HK\$2,000 (\$258) training subsidy. Those interning in the mainland receive a HK\$3,000 (\$387) allowance per month and perhaps another HK\$1,500 (\$194) accommodation subsidy, depending on specific cases. The program aims at lowering the cost of employment and encouraging companies to hire graduates.

We could adopt a similar strategy here in the mainland. The government could allocate a special fund to subsidize companies that hire college graduates. The exact amount of the subsidy could differ from region to region and its proportion to salaries could also be adjusted accordingly.

Statistics show that college graduates were paid about 2,000 yuan (\$292) per month in 2008. The highest average level was in Shanghai, where undergraduate students were paid 2,567 yuan (\$375.65) per

month, junior college students 1,996 yuan (\$292.09), and secondary vocational graduates 1,707 yuan (\$249.8). If the government compensates the companies 1,000 yuan (\$146) per month, they would be more motivated to hire graduates.

Of course other aspects should be considered, such as whether the policy is unfair toward migrant workers and current employees.

Even if it included 120,000 yuan (\$17,561) per person per year, the government subsidy would total 73.2 billion yuan (\$10.7 billion), which is about how much it costs to build a subway.

It's estimated that at least 35 cities have started building subways this year. In China subways cost about 400 million yuan (\$58.53 million) per kilometer, and investment in subways easily reaches around 100 billion yuan (\$14.63 billion) in cities like Hangzhou,

Shenyang and Chongqing.

The benefit is obvious: increased GDP, good performance grades for officials, and heightened property prices.

But in my opinion, it would be even more beneficial if we use the money spent on all the subways to help students find jobs, which, after all, is the toughest task China is confronted with now.

It might seem ridiculous calculating this way. But I'm only throwing out ideas here to generate more thoughts and discussions.

You might dismiss this idea as "Use money to avoid a disaster," as an old saying goes. But a problem that can be solved with money is not a real disaster. If money doesn't work, then we are really in trouble.

The author is a well-known business and finance writer. This article was translated by Xuyang Jingjing

Respect for knowledge best way to bridge generation gap

By Wang Xinlei

The term "generation gap" comes up frequently in daily conversation and usually refers to the lack of understanding or communication between two generations. The typical generation gap exists between parents and children. But the phrase has a broader meaning.

A little attention to the online communities today finds "generation gap" used to describe the relationship between the "post-'80s" and "post-'90s" (people born in the 1980s and 1990s), who are engaged in heated verbal confrontations.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote in *Generation Gap* (1970) on the dynamics and underlying reason for the phenomenon.

The young generation acquires new knowledge and the old generation has to learn from them in order to fit in with the society. The young gets restless with the power of new ideas and starts to question and challenge the authority of the old generation, while the old clings to its dominance.

Under these circumstances, the different mindsets and ideas of the two generations begin to surface, become magnified, and in certain cases manifest as conflict.

The key point here is that the generation gap is rooted in the change in content and flow of mainstream knowledge, or in today's language, "knowledge transformation."

Generation gaps are by no means unique to contemporary society, but a recurring theme throughout history. Knowledge shifts, and a generation gap follows.

We can take a look at Chinese history to prove the point. Generation

gaps barely existed in traditional society because knowledge remained stable due to the "imperial examination system" and didn't change much for a long time.

In the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), China started to show signs of knowledge transformation as Western ideas and information began to rush in. But tradition and modernity were woven together and the generation gap wasn't very noticeable.

The May 4th Movement saw the most outstanding transformation and the most distinct generation gap in Chinese history. It was a time when conflict climaxed between Chinese tradition and the new knowledge system featuring Western science.

A series of issues emerged at the same time: new culture versus old culture, new ideas versus old ideas, tradition versus anti-tradition, conservative versus progressive, all of which reflected the increasingly acute revolution and transformation of ideas.

At that time the generation gap started out with media debates on "new" and "old," "the youth" and "the

ing force.

We are now building a harmonious society. Harmony between generations as an important indicator of social health is drawing more attention. What we can learn from history is that harmony between generations lies in the tolerance of knowledge.

Undoubtedly, the knowledge transformation today also requires the different generations to accept and respect knowledge.

We need to understand that any kind of knowledge has value, regardless of practicality.

We should adopt a healthy attitude: accept new ideas and respect the old knowledge.

Only by being open can we achieve tolerance among people and generations, and reach harmony.

The author is a PhD candidate in history at Fudan University. This article was translated by Xuyang Jingjing

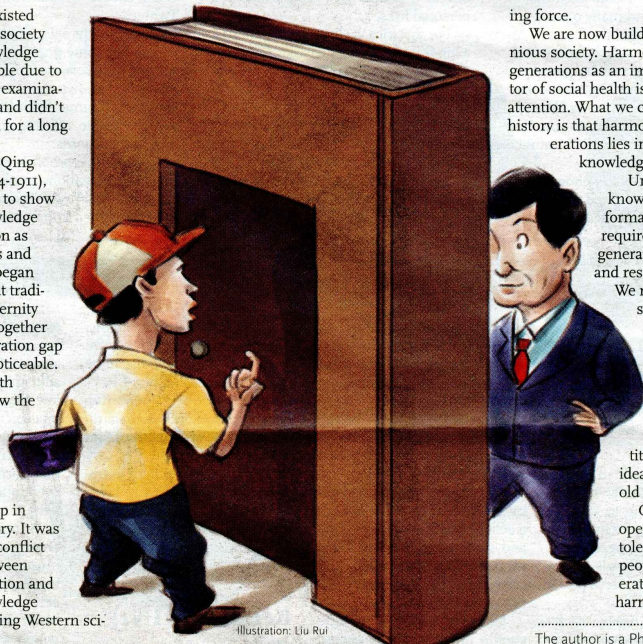


Illustration: Liu Rui

aged." This showed the conflict of ideas between generations. Meanwhile, intellectuals were distinctly divided into an old school and a new school.

Finally the battle of ideas impacted society in general, directly resulting in the rising influence of the youth, who started to play more important roles in society and eventually became a decid-

Readers are invited to contribute to Forum, which features serious editorials on the big issues in today's world. Pieces should be no longer than 800 words and may be submitted via e-mail to forum@globaltimes.com.cn. Send mail to the Op-ed Department, the Global Times, 7/F, Topnew Tower, 15 Guanghua Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100006. Send faxes to (86-10)5297584.