



EVALUATION OF QUALITY OF EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR EVALUATING THE ACTIVITY OF KONSTANTIN PRESLAVSKY UNIVERSITY OF SHUMENⁱ

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Abstract: *The article presents an empirical study of the quality evaluation of education at Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen from two perspectives – the faculty staff and students. Special attention is given to certain features of the learning process, which should be regarded as indicators of quality.*

Key words: *Quality of higher education*

An important regularity of this century is the growing role of education. In economical aspect, the experience of the developed countries shows that the economic growth and improvement of education are interrelated and interdependent components. This reality acquires a special relevance in the context of the intensified competition between higher education institutions. It is obvious that the quality of education will have a decisive role in the competition for preparation of specialists with higher education. This fact is taken into account in the strategy and policy of SHU, which is why the quality of education is the subject of systematic research.

An empirical study was conducted in May 2016. The object of the study are students and faculty staff from all faculties of the University and the College in Dobrich. 223 teachers and 1125 students from second and third course of all majors took part in it. The excerpt of the faculty staff consists of 53.81% - Habilitated professors, 21.08% - Senior Assistants – Ph.D. and 21.08% - assistants.

The instruments of the research are two kinds of standardized survey questionnaires: a questionnaire for teachers about the quality of the learning process and student questionnaire for feedback on the quality of the learning process in a specific academic discipline.

The aim of this study was to examine the main quality characteristics of the learning process and bring out the highlights in their development.

In order to achieve this goal we have set up the following tasks

1. Clarifying the faculty opinion and evaluation of the quality of the learning process.

2. Clarifying and evaluation of students' opinion about the quality of the learning process.

The following indicators are applied to achieve the goal and solve the tasks of the study:

- Attendance of classes by the students.
- Motives for presence and causes of absence from classes.
- Participation of students during classes.
- Evaluation and self-evaluation of the teaching and discipline provision.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the examination procedure
- Attitude of the faculty staff towards the students.

The point of view of students and faculty on the attendance of lectures matches. According to the students, they have a good attendance of lectures. 49.95% of them claim to have visited more than 75% of the lectures. Other 38.87% indicate the range from 50 to 75% of the classes. Only 7.74 % state that they visited less than 50% of the lectures. The students' motives to visit the lectures are mostly related to the desire "to prepare better for the exam" (49.02%) and "due to the interest in the discipline" (40,68). Only 6.17% of them have noted that the instructor requires mandatory attendance.

The attendance of seminars in the relevant discipline is similar. 47.88% of respondents claim to have visited more than 75% of the exercises. 34.94% indicate that they have attended the classes within the range between 50% and 75%. Only 8.22% claim to have visited less than 50%. The reasons for visiting the seminary classes are more diverse, but the first three places in the scale of responses are taken by the following motives: "to acquire the necessary practical skills" (38.73%); to affirm my theoretical knowledge" (28.12%) and "to clarify the difficulties and uncertainties" (23.80%). There are those who acquire self-confidence through professional seminars, but their share is symbolic – 5.28%.

According to the teachers, the attendance of students in the classes is relatively good. Most claim that their classes are regularly attended by certain students (60.09%). 37.22 % of respondents believe that their classes are regularly attended by most students.

The reasons for the absence of students are focused around two perspectives – "students work" (stated by 37.95%) and "the visit is not obligatory according to the university regulations" (stated by 26.41 %). Third place in the rating of answers according to ¼ of the respondents is the answer "student with a lower obligatory visit of classes" (24.36 %).

The control on the presence of students within the University is carried out in a different way. Most of the faculty members include requirements for the students in the curriculum. They constitute 36.25% of the sample. The next largest group has the relative share of 30.83 %. These are educators who

periodically exercise the ongoing monitoring. In third place is the group of respondents who regularly check the students according to a list. Their share represents 28.33 %. Those who do not supervise students in any way are very few.

There is consistence in the opinions of both groups of respondents with regard to the involvement of the students in class.

According to the students, their attitude towards the discipline is determined mostly by "the importance of the subject for their future work". This opinion is supported by 66.13% of the respondents. The style of "the teacher" is important for 20.18% of them, and the "actuality of material" is declared as important by 8.71%.

The lecturers that have participated in the study identify the interest of students towards the discipline as mostly sustainable – 67.71%. 28.70% defined it as episodic. Those who are not interested are very few.

There is a diversity in the style of behavior of students during the lectures

According to the lecturers, most often they listen and try to understand the material (36.32%). About ¼ keep detailed records (23.30%), followed by students, who record the most important (22.08%). The proportion of students who have active conduct is very low. Only 10.23% of respondents participate in discussions and 6.86% answer the lecturer's questions.

According to the teachers, the participation of students in class is diverse. There is no dominant position. With the largest relative share of 21.79% is the group who "listen and try to understand the material," followed by those who "record the most important" and then those that "engage in discussions", both with an equal share of 21.55%. The third place with 17.92% is taken by the students who "answer to my questions." The fourth place is taken by those who "keep detailed notes" with 15.50%.

The data shows that the behavior of students is rather passive during classes. The well-prepared academic staff, the good facilities, good infrastructure provision, the factors on which depends the competitiveness of higher education are meaningless without efforts on behalf of the student.

Most of the students see the connection between the teaching discipline and selected specialty. This statement have 74.17% of the students, 18.88% have given evasive positive response ("yes, partially"). Negative statement have 4.01% ("rather not" – 2.48% and "no"–1.53%)

According to the majority of the respondents, after learning the discipline, their attitude towards it have not changed – it has responded to their expectations. 57.39% of respondents have stated that. Another part of 36.22% say that their attitude has changed. There are those who are disappointed, but their share is practically very small – 3.72%.

The training in the discipline is highly appreciated. 64.14% evaluated it as "very good", and 25.89% as "good". Those that are critical towards it represent

5.94%, defining the training as "satisfactory", and 1.34%-as "unsatisfactory". The negative ones are very few.

The teachers adhere to a diverse toolbox in the preparation and teaching of classes. Most use a combination of the following ways. The largest relative share of lecturers - 23.36% use the "latest bibliography on the topics of the syllabus". In second place was positioned, the use of "tests, texts, illustrations and other materials prepared on a computer" with 21.12% of the answers. The third place was taken by "the use of multimedia (19.52%)". We have to point out that the fourth place in the rating of answers is taken by 'own learning tools and publications" with 19.2%. To put it another way, less than 1/5 of the teachers use in class their own textbooks and materials.

The position of teachers to raise the effectiveness of teaching focuses on practical training. 47.21% of respondents associate it with increasing hours of practical training, other-19.74% with provision of practical experience in the discipline. There is a category of respondents who believe that the effectiveness of teaching is relevant to the possibility of continuous training and specialization of the teacher (19.74%).

Students who do not have encountered difficulty in the process of training in the discipline have a larger share (57.10%). The causes for the students having difficulty in the discipline vary. Most often these are "gaps in knowledge acquired in secondary school (16.19% of respondents); "the high style of teaching" (about 9% of respondents) and the "lack of sufficient literature" (8.05% of respondents).

The opinion of teachers in relation to the low results of the students is of interest. A large proportion of them (41.78%) find the reason for that in the low degree of mastery of the knowledge from secondary education. About 1/5 believe that the reason is related to the lack of willingness to learn – 21.83%. The remaining answers gravitate around the thesis for "wrong choice of major" by the student" (11.97%) "lack of perspective for an honorable professional career" (10,56%) and "misjudgment of opportunities for professional development provided by the discipline" (9.15%).

The experience of leading universities (Harvard, Stanford, Yale, Princeton) confirms the well-known fact that the preparation of competitive specialists with higher education depends to a large extent on the level of training of the students enrolled at the University. [2] Therefore, attention should be paid to the quality of secondary education, as it provides the basic flow of young people at the entrance of the university.

The provision of information in the discipline is also at a high level. Almost half of the students evaluated it as "very good" (49,71%) and 31.74% as "good", those that defined it as "satisfactory" represent the relative share of 11.57% and critically oriented 2.87%- as "unsatisfactory". Those that are practically negative towards it are very few.

There is a similar assessment towards provision of the textbooks and teaching aids on the discipline. With the largest relative share is the Group of students who evaluated the provision as "very good" – 43.80%. 33.59% evaluated it as "good", and 12.69% as "satisfactory". The critics who have an unsatisfactory score are presented with 4.58%.

According to students, in the course of teaching, the teacher is correct in relation to the procedure. At the beginning of the semester, he presents before the students his requirements. This is stated by 93.59% of respondents. In addition, this procedure is done in the end of the semester as well ("Yes, absolutely" – 84% and "Yes, partially"-8.43%). According to the students the teacher implements the preliminary decided way of forming their evaluation ("Yes, absolutely" – 84.80% and "partially" – 9.08%).

Overall, the ratio of students towards ongoing control is mature. More than half of them share the opinion that it stimulates them to prepare systematically (57,03%) and helps the objective assessment (34,94%). There are those students who claim that it unnecessarily complicates the student, but their share is relatively small – 4.82%

Students have positive opinion about the assessment of their knowledge during the semester and exam. Moreover, it almost always enables them to be informed about the reasons for their assessment – 91.48% of the respondents have replied positively. The vast majority believe that evaluation is always objective – 60.11%. The other 1/3 of the respondents assert that in most cases it is objective (32.73%). Negative are 4.11% of the respondents (in most cases the "subjective" – 2.96 % and "always subjective"-1.15%).

The data shows that teachers are loyal to students in the learning process. Most of the teachers in the study claim to implement the preliminary decided way of forming the assessment – 96.40%.

Overall, the teachers are satisfied with the administrative services at the University and the Faculty. They give a very good score to all sectors and units. The support of this assessment is most convincing for "Accounting and cashier" (84.23%) and for administrative services in the Faculty with 77.93% of the respondents.

Similarly, the customer service in the library is rated 70.72%. Studying Department (69.37%) and Student Office (68.92%). The critics and disgruntled by the service in all administrative units are very few, they are practically null and have no role in the study.

The overall learning process starts with the attitude of teachers towards their students. According to the interviewed students their relations with the teaching staff are at a good level. The relationship with lecturers is primarily professional (53.91%) and official (37.89%). The relations with the Assistant are identical. They are rather collegial (55.76%) and official (31.30%). There are those who maintain friendly relations with the students in both groups.

According to 6.37% of respondents those relations are with the assistant and 4.52% said that for the lecturer in this discipline. There are conflicting relationships, but they are marked by a very small share of individuals. For conflicts with lecturer attest 1.70% of respondents, with the Assistant-1.05%.

Teachers valued its relations with students primarily as collegial (88.65%) and, to a lesser extent as friendly (4.37%), and as a strictly formal (3.93%).

There is a similar evaluation for the relationship of the respondents with the other Member of staff, providing training in the discipline. 80.52% of respondents define is as collegial, as friendly-9.96%, and as strictly formal-2.60%.

As a result of the analysis, it can be concluded that the University is working diligently to ensure quality of education. There is good attendance of classes. Almost half of the students attend classes and lectures, and workshops for over 75%. The reasons to visit the lectures are primarily "to prepare better for the exam" and "because of interest in the discipline". The reasons for taking part in the seminars are "to acquire the necessary practical skills; "to help my theoretical knowledge" and "to clarify my difficulties and uncertainties". The reasons for absence focus around the fact that "students work" and "attendance of classes is not required by the university regulations".

Teachers define the interest of students in the specific discipline as sustainable. However, there is a very low proportion of students who have an active behavior. They prefer listening and writing to answering questions and participating in discussions.

The task of higher education is to resolutely focus on preparation, which not only and not simply provides knowledge, but also forms and develops ability for creative thinking, acquiring of new knowledge. It can be said that a competitive education is present when students learn to educate themselves, to develop their creative potential and use it in the most efficient way. [2] It is obvious that the behaviour of the students during classes is far from desired. There is a longing for reproduction, not the ability for self-guidance, thought and action in a real work environment.

Students generally value highly the training in a specific discipline. However, in the preparation and conducting of classes very few lecturers use their own textbooks and publications. This is the signal for two facts. First, poor provision of the disciplines of the curriculum with their own textbooks. Second, the relationship between the scientific and educational activities of the academic staff is lost. At the same time, perceptions of teachers to enhance the effectiveness of teaching does not include the issue of textbooks and supplies.

The attitude of students towards continuous control and examination procedure is mature. The procedure itself is almost always objective and transparent. Students may be informed of the reasons for their objective evaluation.

Students have positive impressions of the administrative services in all sectors and all levels of University activity.

The University microclimate is good. According to surveyed students the relations with the teaching staff are mostly collegial. Such is also the evaluation of lecturers.

Without underestimating what is already done, it can be said that there is a lot to be desired for the integration of students into the educational process as well as their activation. The entry of the University into the European educational area can become when we reconsider the fact that the education is one of the most powerful factors for development of the young generation and to the evolution of society.

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