

STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF FINAL SEMINARS – METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS OF RESEARCH

Підготовка на факультеті «Геотехнології та управління виробництвом» ДонНТУ студентів за фахом «Менеджмент організації природоохоронної діяльності» вимагає втілення передових методів навчання та використання досвіду провідних навчальних закладів не тільки України, але і європейських країн. Стаття присвячена актуальній проблематиці підготовки студентів аналогічних спеціальностей в Польщі після її вступу до Євросоюзу.

Подготовка на факультете «Геотехнологии и управление производством» ДонНТУ студентов по специальности «Менеджмент организации природоохранной деятельности» требует воплощения передовых методов обучения и использования опыта ведущих учебных заведений не только Украины, но и европейских стран. Статья посвящена актуальной проблематике подготовки студентов аналогичных специальностей в Польше после ее вступления в Евросоюз.

Preparation at faculty « Geotechnology and production management » Donetsk national technical university of students on a speciality «Environment management» demands an embodiment of the advanced methods of training and use of experience of conducting educational institutions not only Ukraine, but also the European countries. Article is devoted to an actual problematics of preparation of students of similar specialities in Poland after its introduction into the European Community.

Introduction. There are a few sources of inspiration for taking up the research on students' expectations of final seminars. The most important is necessity to improve education methods on management faculties. Nowadays it is a very important task considering the labor market requirements for graduates and increasing competition in educational area. Besides it is worth noticing that management sciences should enable students to put knowledge into practice in various organizational units. The essence of management sciences is „wondering in what way the science can help economy?”. Therefore it is postulated that teaching management sciences should include:

1. critical analysis verified in practice theories in order to gain the ability of knowledge valuing,
2. acquainting management methods in connection with identifying the circumstances of their rational using,
3. recognizing the conditions of organization's functioning in order to choose proper theories and management methods
4. Consequently there is a need of permanent increasing the education level and its adapting to students' requirements as well economic reality. However in order to cope with those tasks it is necessary to precise them. For the present, there is no specific research documenting students' expectations of professors of management faculties.

Conversely the intentional and reasonable expectations are précised during the last years of education. At that time students have general knowledge and abilities. They expect to specialize in selected subjects and some practical implementations. Moreover at this time their professional aspirations are crystallized. During apprenticeship or regular work they become the active members of labor market and they have a possibility to confront their knowledge and abilities with labor market requirements. Therefore verifying specializations and didactic aims' is so significant especially throughout the last years of studying.

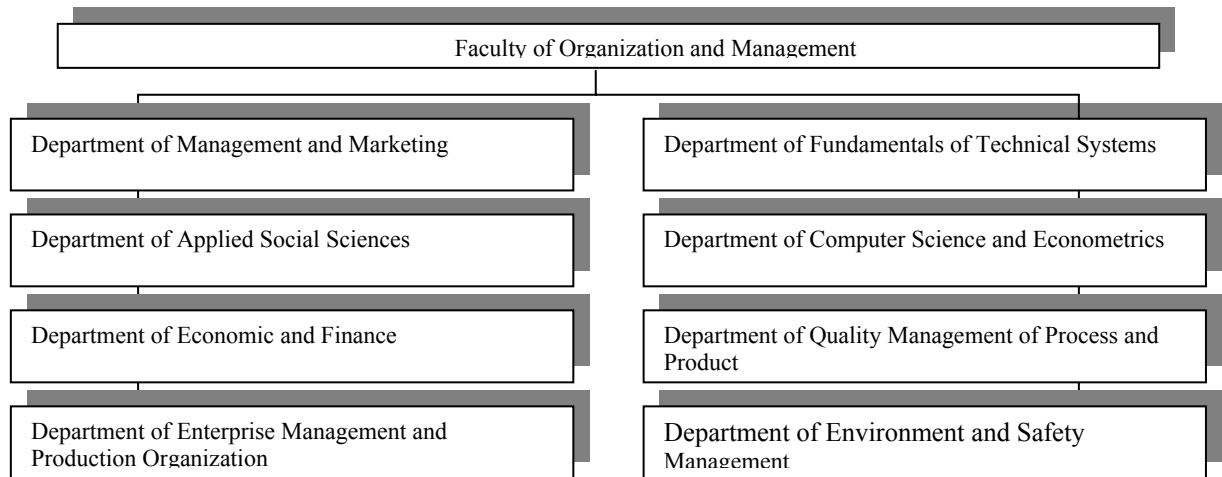
In connection with above circumstances and necessity of increasing the education quality the research on students' expectations of final seminars has been taken. The main aim of the studies is to identify students' expectations of final seminars and examination. Moreover following additional aims have been defined:

- finding out the expectations of way of leading final seminars,
- identifying main determinants of dissertation's theme and professor's choice,
- précising the expectation of leading final seminars professors,
- indicating the main problems connecting with writing the dissertation,
- estimating the role of apprenticeship in future career,
- verifying the usefulness of final seminars and writing dissertation in starting managerial career.

Place of research. The research was taken up on Faculty of Organization and Management in Silesian University of Technology. The Faculty of Organization and Management emerged from the Faculty of Materials Science, Metallurgy, Transport and Management on 1 September, 1995. It is situated in Zabrze but teaching is also carried out in Katowice.

Students at Faculty of Organization and Management could widen knowledge in eight departments offering various range of specializations, related to the humanities and technical science. Such a variety of specializations connected with industrial cooperation enable students to reach interdisciplinary knowledge as well practical abilities. The Faculty's structure is shown on scheme 1.

The research was taken up in the midst of students working on their thesis during final seminars in all departments exposed at scheme 1. Therefore in the next part of the article the short characteristic of departments' studies is presented.



Scheme 1- Faculty of Organization and Management in Silesian University of technology –organizational structure

Department of Management and Marketing focuses on development of methods and techniques for strategic management in companies and region. Moreover its research includes marketing reorientation in companies and new tendencies of change management. Information technology and innovation are also analyzed in this department. In the Department of Management and Marketing students could choose following specializations: Innovation Management, Company Management and Personal Marketing.

Department of Economic and Finance takes up research on the fields of finance, accountancy and controlling. Resource allocation, economic analysis and investment studies are also investigated in this Department. It offers following specializations: Finance and Marketing and Resource Management.

Department of Fundamentals of Technical Systems works on designing and technical planning of production systems, including cleaner production technologies. Furthermore its research includes management of the operation of technical systems. There are two specializations in Department of Fundamentals of Technical Systems: Informatics Systems and Management in Public Sector.

Department of Quality Management of Process and Product takes up researches on quality in company and economy. Moreover main interests of this department concern recent methods of technology management and ecological processes management. Department offers following specializations: Quality Management in Industrial Company and Quality and Technology Management.

Department of Applied Social Sciences propose more humanistic subjects. It specializes in human resources management, sociology and managerial psychology. Furthermore this Department focuses on behavioral methods of management. Students have a possibility to chose specializations in: Human Resources Management and Personal Management and Social Communication.

Next department offers students four specializations. It is *Department of Enterprise Management and Production Organization*, which focuses on: integrated management in industrial companies, logistics and production management. Mentioned specializations are: Logistic Systems in Enterprise, Industrial Systems Management, Production Systems Management and Designing and Restructuring Industrial Enterprises.

Technical issues are also considered in *Department of Computer Science and Econometrics*. The main studies include: informatics systems in management and statistical methods for economic research as well modeling and forecasting of economic processes and phenomena. Department of Computer Science and Econometrics offers education at following specializations: Informatics Systems in Management and Informatics Systems in Industrial Technologies.

At Faculty of Organization and Management students could also widen their knowledge about ecology and safety in industry. Those issues are analyzed at *Department of Environment and Safety*

Management. It offers following specializations: Environment Management, Environmental Management Systems, Safety Organization and Management as well Systems of Safety Management.

It is worth of mentioning that at the Faculty there is also Polish Center of Clearer Technology. It initiates strategy of clear production and Environmental Management Systems in Poland.

Methodology. At Faculty of Organization and Management intramural students choose characterized specializations after fifth semester. Final seminars begin at sixth semester and last until tenth semester. During described survey students of tenth semester were examined. They were qualified as an object of research because they could confront their expectations with reality of final seminars. Moreover after five semesters of learning they have own considered opinions and suggestions. The research was taken up on a group of 162 students of all departments. It was realized in May and June in 2007.

The research concerned to five different areas connected with teaching during final seminars and writing thesis. The first part was titled *the general area*. Its task was to identify the factors responsible for specialization's choice. Furthermore in this part students defined their preferences about the way of finishing studies. They had to decide – the final exam or the thesis.

In the second part of research called *organization and teaching during final seminars*, students' needs in mentioned area were identified. The main purposes of final seminars were defined as well the subject matter was précised. In this part students have also possibility to compare their expectations with the seminars in which they had taken part.

The third area concerned *the choice of a professor conferring a degree – a promoter*. The reasons of students' choices were identified and the tasks for chosen professor were defined.

The next part of research regarded to *problems with writing a thesis* (it is a comprehensive essay essential to achieve a master degree). In this part factors influencing the choice of thesis's subject were identified. In addition the opinions about a necessity of including theoretical and practical parts in the thesis were verified. Moreover the students were asked about the main problems connected with writing a thesis. In this part usefulness of apprenticeship was estimated. Students were also asked about the role of final seminars in creating a thesis and finding a job.

The last part of research was connected with *final examination and preparing to defense of a thesis*. In this area the knowledge of final examinations' rules were tested. Moreover students were asked if they knew the criteria of thesis's valuation and if they appreciated their significance.

Areas of research characterized above enable a complex assessment of students' requirements of final seminars, from choosing a specialization and a professor confirming a degree, through teaching during final seminars and writing a thesis, to final examinations and thesis's valuation.

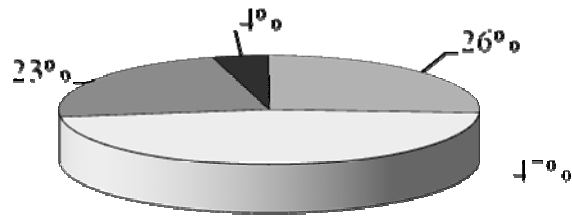
In the research general methodology was used. The methods related to real processes and events. During data's collecting and their explaining analysis was used. Synthesis was helpful in formulating final conclusions. During research students had to fill a questionnaire of a poll. It enabled quick and convenient studies on a large population. Moreover the poll technique helped to aggregate and to explain them in a standardized approach. Finally it let to examine such a subjective phenomenon as students' expectations of final seminars.

General expectations – results of research. In this part of the papers the results of a poll are analyzed and commented. In the first part concerning general opinions the factors influencing specialization's choice were identified. The results show that the most important factor is career's aspirations (47%). Science interests are less important – only 26% of students acknowledge them as a cause of specialization's choice. 23% of polled students say that the specialization's choice is accidental. About 4% of students indicate other circumstances such as: family traditions or a lack of interesting specializations. Detailed results of this part are presented on a chart one.

In the general area of the poll students were asked what way of finishing studies they preferred (question 2). They were given two possibilities – a final examination or writing a thesis. Most of them (88%) chose writing a thesis. Only 12% of polled students preferred finishing studies with complex final examination.

In the second part of the poll organizational and teaching needs essential during final seminars were examined. First questions concerned the duration of final seminars and main aims of these lectures. According to 43% of students final seminars should last four semesters. About 40% students suggest that it should be shorten to tree semesters. Only 17% of those polled say that final seminars should last two semesters.

Question 1. What factors influence the specialisation's choice?



a. science interests
 b. career's aspirations
 c. accidental choice
 d. others

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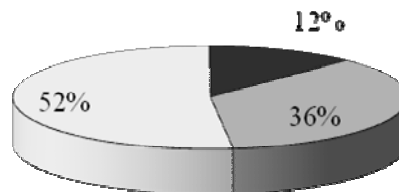
Source: The results of a poll.

The main aim of final seminars (question 4) in opinion of questioned students is to help in creating and defending a thesis (83%). According to them less significant is reaching the ability of oral defining their thoughts and arguing in a discussion (10%) as well widening their knowledge in specialization's area (7%).

In the next part of the poll students were asked about preferred forms and subject matter of final seminars. Answers for the questions about forms of final seminars are shown on a chart 2.

Chart 2

Pytanie 5. What form of final seminars do you prefer?



a. a lecture
 b. reading and discussing a paper
 c. separate meetings with a professor

Source: The results of a poll.

According students the best form of final seminars is a separate meeting with a professor. A lot of polled students preferred a discussion connected with reading a paper. Only 12% chose lectures as a favorite form of final seminars.

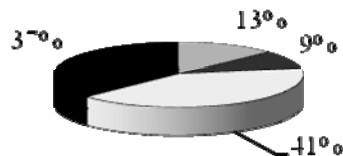
During final seminars students (question 6) expect to learn and discuss both methodology and science problems (62%). 29% polled students declare that they should learn only methodology and according to 9% of them during seminars only scientific problems should be discussed.

The last question (question 7) included in the part about final seminars' organization verified students' expectations with reality. 62% of polled students were satisfied by organization of final seminars but 38% of them were disappointed.

Next area of the questionnaire concerned a professors' s choice. In the first part of it polled students were questioned about factors influencing on a professor's choice (question 8) and about demands' hierarchy for professors supervising writing a thesis (question 9). The answers for question 8 are presented on chart 3.

Chart 3

Question 5. What factors influence on a professor's choice?*



- a. objective criteria such as: knowledge, experience, scientific interest
- b. subjective criteria such as: sympathy, intuition, students' opinions
- c. objective and subjective criteria
- d. others

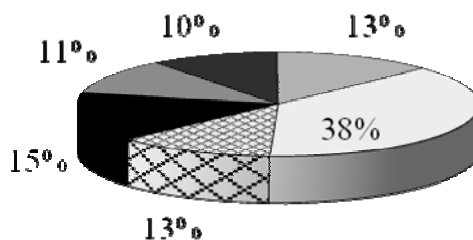
Source: The results of a poll.

According to data presented on chart 3, objective and subjective criteria are important for students choosing a professor. Sympathy, intuition and students' opinion are important only for 9% of polled population. Knowledge and experience as only criteria are significant for 13% students. In is worth of mentioning that 37% of polled students could not choose a professor on their own – it was a department's decision caused by a limit of 10 students for one professor in a year.

Professors have different tasks. Spectrum of students' expectations in this area is shown on chart 4.

Chart 4

Question 9. Tasks for a professor



- formulating a thesis's subject
- writing a thesis's plan
- indicating sources of information
- helping in a theoretical part
- helping in a practical part
- preparing for a final examinations

Source: The results of a poll.

According to questioned students a professor should first of all help in creating a thesis's plan. 15% of students expected of help in theoretical part of a thesis. Indicating sources of information and formulating a thesis's subject is important for 13% of polled students. 11% of questioned population said that professor had to help in practical part of a thesis. Preparing for a final examination is significant only for 10% of students.

Creating and defending a thesis – results of research. In the next part of the poll there were eleven questions about problems connected with writing a thesis (questions from 10 to 21). They referred to general issues associated with creating a thesis. One of them was about the time essential to write an essay (question 12). Polled students know that it is a time-consuming task. 46% of them spend more than 700 hours to write a thesis. 40% of students need more than 500 hours but less than 700 hours. Only 14% of polled students consider that writing a thesis could last less than 500 hours.

Next general question was about a choice of thesis's subject (question 17). According to polled population the most important circumstance of that choice is apprenticeship and future career as well scientific interest – 43% answers. For 23% of students future career is the most significant factor. Only scientific aspiration is important also for 23%. 7% of polled students choose a subject because of its

easiness and 4% of them indicate other factors such as: students' suggestion or access to data for a practical part of a thesis.

Among general requests there was also a question about the difficulties connected with writing a thesis (question 16). According to 64% of polled students creating a practical part of a thesis is the most complicated task. For 24% of them choosing subject is a big problem. Writing a practical part seems to be easy because only 12% consider it as a difficult stage of writing a thesis.

In spite of difficulties connected with creating a practical part of a thesis, 90% of students agree that it is an essential element of it (question 11). The role of practice is once again appreciated. 87% of students think that a thesis should include also a theoretical part (question 10).

In the next part of the poll students were asked more detailed questions about particular problems with writing practical (question 19) and theoretical (question 18) parts of a thesis. 43% of students consider editorial work as the most difficult. 31% of them have some problems with finding theoretical and practical sources of scientific information. About 20% cannot manage with glosses. Only 6% of polled students have problems with graphic and word editor.

Different problems are connected with a practical part of a thesis. A half of polled student has difficulties with finding data. 28% of polled population cannot realize researches and 18% of it have methodological problems. Only 4% of students have difficulties with selecting data and formulating conclusions. There are also some people that do not have any problems and some students that have problems with everything.

Two questions referred to final activities connected with writing a thesis (question 20 and 21). The polled student were asked if they knew the rules of writing an introduction and making conclusions (question 20). 80% of polled students acknowledge knowledge of listed rules. Students know also the rules of creating bibliography and indexes (79%).

In the part referred to writing a thesis there were three questions connected with apprenticeship and a role of a thesis in preparing for future career (question 13,14,15). 70% of polled students acknowledge usefulness of apprentice in writing a thesis. And it is worth of mentioning that only 20% of them had some problems with finding a right apprenticeship (question 14). Such answers emphasize the key position of apprenticeship at final stage of education and in future career. However in students' opinion writing a thesis is not so important. Only 54% of polled students perceive writing a thesis as useful in future career. Consequently writing a thesis is necessary only for finishing studies.

The last part of a poll is connected with preparing for final examinations (questions 22-24). The main aim of it was to examine acquaintance of final exams' criteria. Unfortunately 53% of students do not know final exams' rules (question 22) and 47% of them are not familiar with evaluation's criteria (question 23). But they perceive the knowledge of those rules as very important (question 24).

Conclusions. During research students emphasized practical aspects of management. Those aspects influence on specialization and apprenticeship choices. They are also important during writing a thesis, especially a practical part of it. Conversely a lot of students have problems with creating a practical part and with finding data. Such opinions suggest that connection between practice and theory is not efficient.

On the other hand it is worth of mentioning that students appreciate the meaning of management theory. According to them a thesis should include a theoretical part and theoretical problems should be discussed during final seminars. However they have some problems with creating a theoretical part of a thesis. Perhaps it is a consequence of management theories' variety.

A lot of polled students are not satisfied by standards of teaching during final seminars. It is an alarming matter. Students do not appreciate discussions. They prefer individual meetings with a professor. According to students a professor should help them at all levels of writing a thesis, especially in writing a plan and creating contents.

The results of research confirm that education of management needs consequent improvement and developing. Education should emphasize connections between practice and theory. Professors should offer interactive means of teaching provoking discussions and critical thinking.

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