



UNIVERSITETI I EVROPËS JUGLINDORE
УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ НА ЈУГОИСТОЧНА ЕВРОПА
SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

Quality of Assessment, Qualification and
Evaluation in Higher Education
Conference Proceedings

South East European University

Tetovo, Republic of Macedonia, 2014

Editor: Quality Conference Review Board

Layout: Mensur Mamuti

Print: "ArberiaDesign", Tetovo

Number of copies: 50

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација
Национална и универзитетска библиотека "Св. Климент Охридски", Скопје

378:005.585(062)

QUALITY of assessment, qualification and evaluation in higher
education: conference proceedings. - Tetovo: South East European
University, 2015. - стр.; 24 см

Фусноти кон трудовите. - Библиографија кон трудовите

ISBN 978-608-4503-99-6

а) Високо образование - Евалуација - Собири
COBISS.MK-ID 98920970

Preface

These proceedings derive from the presentations given at the regional Higher Education Conference on Assessment, Qualification and Evaluation which was held on 20 June 2014 on the Tetovo campus of South East European University. This was the second conference on the theme of quality enhancement organized by the University.

The intention of this conference was to gather in one place interested instructors, researchers, students, and managers, and to allow them to exchange ideas about quality in assessment and evaluation with their peers. It is heartening to note that this pressing topic—one with both professional and ethical implications in the work of higher education—is already generating significant and informative research in the Balkan region. Ultimately, quality of assessment, of qualification, and of evaluation lies at the heart of the teacher's agreement with the students in the class and impacts on their individual careers as well as wider social and economic well-being and development. It is the hope of the conference organizers, and of the Editorial Board of this publication, that this volume will contribute to this discussion.

The papers published here have been submitted by the presenters in expanded and elaborated form from their presentations; this allows each individual contributor, or team of contributors, to express the results of their research most fully. For the purposes of widest comprehension and distribution, the English language was required of submissions. As many of the authors, however, are not native speakers of English, the papers have been edited for linguistic coherence. They have not been edited for content as such. They do not necessarily reflect the views of South East European University, nor of the editorial board of these proceedings. They have also been represented to the Editorial Review Committee as being original contributions that have not been published elsewhere and are fully compliant with all appropriate scholarly citation. The Editorial Review Committee has published these papers in good faith, but the responsibility for proper academic usage and citation remains with the contributors.

Some presenters chose not to submit their work for publication in these proceedings; we gratefully appreciate their presentations made at the conference. We also acknowledge with thanks the work of the Organizing and Review Committees and the contribution of staff and students, as well as participants, who helped to make the conference a success.

Table of Contents

Elena Spirovska

THE IMPACT OF ASSESSMENT ON STUDENTS' LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING..... 5

Blagojka Zdravkovska-Adamova, Aleksandra P. Taneska, Renata Stojanovska

TAILORING STUDENT ASSESSMENT FOR MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE 1 AT SEEU BASED ON STUDENTS' NEEDS17

Faton Mehmedi, Visar Shehu, Adrian Besimi

A PLATFORM FOR AUTOMATIC ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAMMING ASSIGNMENTS.....36

Gentiana Shahini, Fadil Latifi, Vjollca Ahmedi

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION47

Kovacevska Ivona, Petrovski Mihajlo, Dimova Cena, Georgiev Zlatko, Sabanov Erol

SELF ASSESSMENT OF DENTAL STUDENTS AS A LEARNING MODALITY IN PRE-CLINICAL DENTAL EDUCATION55

Jehona Mustafa-Murtezani, Iranda Bajrami

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS AS A WAY OF ASSESSMENT: STUDENTS' AND LECTURERS' PERSPECTIVES64

Veronika Kareva

APPROACHES AND PRACTICES FOR CONDUCTING THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING80

Luiza Zeqiri

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSTRUCTIVE AND APPLICABLE PRE AND POST TEACHING OBSERVATION FEEDBACK88

Rashit Emini

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH AN OBSERVATION PROCESS101

Natasha Aleksoska

INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY FOR ENHANCED HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY.....120

Burbuqe Kaprolli Hamzai

PREPARATION OF SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY GRADUATES FOR THE JOB MARKET IN MACEDONIA132

Heather Henshaw

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA....144

Izet Zeqiri, Brikend Haziri

STRATEGIC PLANNING IN FUNCTION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN MACEDONIA155

Muhamet Racaj, Ivica Danevski

SELF-EVALUATION IN THE FUNCTION OF MORE EFFICIENT USAGE OF RESOURCES IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES IN THE MILITARY ACADEMY, "GENERAL MIHAILO APOSTOLSKI – SKOPJE"166

THE IMPACT OF ASSESSMENT ON STUDENTS' LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Elena Spirovska

e.spirovska@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyse and define the relationship between assessment and students' learning. The article aims to analyse the impact of assessment methods and processes in higher education, where the main emphasis should be on learning rather than teaching, focusing on the context of foreign language learning. Research (Snyder, 1971; Miller & Parlett, 1974) focusing on student learning at prominent universities, showed that assessment, rather than teaching, influenced students' learning. The Snyder and Miller & Parlett studies (in Gibbs & Simpson, 2004) analysed the way students respond to various assessment procedures. Recent studies have emphasized the importance of understanding the way students respond to innovations in assessment (Sambell & McDowell, 1998, in Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). The purpose of this paper is to focus on formative and continuous assessment and tasks which are assigned as a part of the language learning curriculum and their impact on achieving the learning outcomes in comparison to tasks which are not assessed. Via theoretical and practical research, supported by a questionnaire for students, the article tries to answer the question of the importance of assessment on students' learning and present the students' view on assessment and the way assessment influences learning.

Key words: *Assessment, students learning, influence, research, teaching, foreign language.*

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this paper is to analyse and define the relationship between assessment and students' learning. The paper aims to analyse the impact of assessment methods and processes in higher education, where the main emphasis should be placed on learning rather than teaching, focusing on the context of foreign language learning.

The reality is that various forms and methods of assessment (including formative, summative and continuous) have existed as long as education itself. However, the need for analysis and gaining deeper insight into ways assessment affects learning emerged relatively late and after shifting the importance of teaching to learning in classroom settings. Even presently, the connection between learning and assessment is not explored sufficiently.

The recent approach to the teaching and learning issues in the context of higher education puts the emphasis on learning as well as learning outcomes, as well as assessment focusing on reaching the learning outcomes. Gibbs & Simpson (2004-2005, p.3) illustrate the connection between learning and assessment in the following way:

Where institutional learning and teaching strategies focus on assessment, they are nearly always about aligning learning outcomes with assessment and about specifying the assessment criteria. The most reliable, rigorous and cheat-proof assessment systems are often accompanied by dull and lifeless learning that has short lasting outcomes - indeed they often lead to such learning. We are not arguing for unreliable assessment but we are arguing that we should design assessment first to support worthwhile learning, and worry about reliability later.

(Gibbs & Simpson (2004-2005, p.3)

The quote above summarizes what should be one of the main goals of designing assessment. The current trends in higher education should focus on reliable and objective assessment, assessment that reflects the learning outcomes in an appropriate way as well as assessment as a way of improving learning.

Research (Snyder, 1971; Miller & Parlett, 1974) focusing on student learning at prominent universities, showed that assessment, rather than teaching, influenced students learning. The Snyder and Miller & Parlett studies (in Gibbs & Simpson, 2004-2005) analysed the way students respond to various assessment procedures. These studies also showed distinction between the formal curriculum as stated in course documents and the informal curriculum constituted by teachers' expectations. In fact, according to Snyder (1971), the students focused their work and their learning more on the tasks which were part of the "hidden curriculum": "I just don't bother doing the homework now. I approach the courses so I can get an 'A' in the easiest manner, and it is amazing how little work you have to do if you really don't like the course." (Snyder, 1971, p.50, in Gibbs & Simpson, 2004-2005).

The question whether assessment improves learning or not is also raised by Angelo & Cross (2004). According to them, there is still an on-going debate whether classroom assessment improves students'

learning or has no impact on it. Angelo & Cross (2004) provide examples of research which either supports the claim that learning is improved by assessment. For instance, Walker (1999, in Angelo & Cross, 2004), by using test scores and grades as indicators, has found evidence of increased student learning in classes where they have used classroom assessment. On the other hand, they also list examples of research where there is no evidence that assessment supports learning (Olmsted, 1991, p.64, in Angelo& Cross, 2004, p. 376). Therefore, they state the following regarding this issue:

How can we account for the gap between faculty and student perception of improved learning and the equivocal evidence? After years of working with faculty, we can suggest several possible reasons for this disparity. One possibility, of course, is that classroom assessment really does not improve student learning. It may be that faculty, impressed by sudden wealth of detailed feedback they receive from classroom assessment are simply getting a clearer look at what is going unseen all along. A crude analogy would be to biologists imagining that the number of microscopic life forms has drastically increased because of the invention of the microscope.

(Angelo& Cross, 2004, p. 376)

The quote above clearly shows that determining whether classroom assessment improves student learning will require deeper and more detailed research which will produce clearer results accompanied by suggestions about assessment criteria which will have positive impact on student learning.

Certain authors argue in favor of assessment in terms of learning, stating that assessment is vital when it comes to student learning. Regarding the importance of assessment for learning, Boud (2007, p.14) states the following regarding learning and assessment: “Assessment can have a crucial role to play in an educational framing of learning of all kinds and in all settings “. In addition, recent studies have emphasized the importance of understanding the way students respond to innovations in assessment (Sambell & McDowell, 1998, in Gibbs & Simpson, 2004).

The notion of assessment for learning was defined in the following way:

Assessment for learning is any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose for promoting students’ learning. It thus differs from assessment designed primarily to serve the purposes of accountability or of ranking, or of certifying competence. An assessment activity can help learning if it provides information that teachers and their students can use as feedback in assessing themselves and one another and in modifying the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.

(Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B., William, D., 2004, p.10)

The same authors recommend changes in the following areas in order to accomplish a positive impact of assessment on learning:

- questioning
- feedback through grading

- peer and self assessment
- formative use of summative tests

In terms of questioning, Black et al., 2004, recommend allowing longer wait time for the answer after posing the question, since, according to them: “Increasing the wait time can help more students become involved in discussions and increase the length of their replies” (Black et al., 2004, p.10). They also suggest moving away from the routine pattern of questions and answers by asking for students’ ideas, using open- ended questions, group discussions and problem- solving tasks.

The essence of the comments which accompany the grade, or feedback through grading, is more related to the nature of the comments rather than the amount of the comments. According to Black et al., 2004, effective comments should identify what has been done well and what still needs to be improved. In addition, they also suggest creating opportunities, for instance during feedback sessions, during which the students should respond to comments as a part of the learning process.

Peer and self-assessment improve learning if students understand the learning objective of the specific task and the criteria for accomplishing it. Black et al., 2004, p.14, argue that: “Peer assessment is uniquely valuable because students may accept criticisms of their work from one another that they would not take seriously if the remarks were offered by a teacher. Peer work is also valuable because the interchange will be in language that students themselves naturally use and because students learn by taking the roles of teachers and examiners of others”. Peer and self -assessment can be successfully implemented by using rubrics and sets of defined criteria.

Black et al., 2004, p.14, also discuss the importance of summative assessment on learning and the learning opportunities that the aftermath of summative tests can provide. They suggest peer marking of test papers by using rubrics and answer keys which can be followed by discussion of more difficult questions. In addition, they suggest involving the students to some extent into the preparation of the summative exams and encouraging the students to think of appropriate test questions. Encouraging peer and self assessment of summative tests also help the students to understand how their work might be improved. In conclusion, they state the following: “The overall message is that summative tests should become a positive part of the learning process. Through active involvement in the testing process, students can see that they can be beneficiaries rather than victims of testing, because tests can help them improve learning” (Black et al., 2004, p.14).

To summarize, it is possible to enhance learning and change the classroom environment by using assessment. Of course, it may be necessary to introduce certain changes and modifications to the approach to assessment, which can include the cooperation between teachers and learners in order to improve the learning, encouraging students to be more active and independent learners and reflecting on the possible ways in which assessment can improve learning.

RESEARCH METHODS, PARTICIPANTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

As it was stated at the beginning of this paper, the aim was to analyse the potential connection between students' learning and assessment methods. In addition, it analyses students' view on the impact of assessment methods on learning progress.

The data collection method consisted of a Likert psychometric scale based questionnaire which targeted students. The questionnaire designed for students consisted of 13 questions/ statements, which were adapted from a questionnaire measuring and interpreting assessment experience by Gibbs & Simpson, (2003). The students could choose between the following answers to the statements: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The questionnaire provided an option for the participants to give additional comments regarding assessment and learning. The questionnaire statements were designed with the purpose to explore students' attitudes towards assessment and learning in general, which means that the questionnaire did not target a specific course or a specific teacher. The questionnaire was anonymous.

The group of students consisted of 36 participants who studied at South East European University, aged between 19-22 years old. Their English language proficiency varied from intermediate to upper intermediate.

After collecting the completed questionnaire and calculating the answers, the following results were obtained.

Statement 1: I do the same amount of study each week. It doesn't matter if I have an assignment.

The majority of the students disagreed (19), 10 students were neutral, 5 agreed and 2 strongly agreed..

Statement 2: I only study things that are going to be practiced / used in the assignments. The majority of the students (14) were neutral, 10 agreed and 12 disagreed with this statement.

Statement 3: In weeks when the assignments are due, I study longer and work harder. The majority of students agreed (17 agree and strongly agree answers); while 12 were neutral and 7 disagreed.

Statement 4: I learn more from doing the assignments than from studying the course material. The total number of students who agreed with this statement is 12, 8 were neutral and 16 disagreed.

Statement 5: The assignments which give very clear instructions about what you are expected to do help me learn. The majority of students agreed (26) while 6 were neutral and 4 disagreed.

Statement 6: Working on assignments really makes me think and practice the material learned. The majority of students (23) agreed, while 8 chose the neutral answer. Several students (5 in total) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Statement 7: The feedback I get from the teachers is useful and helps me learn. The majority of the students, or 26 in total, opted to agree or strongly agree with this statement, while 2 were neutral, and 8 disagreed.

Statement 8: **The feedback helps me to understand things better.** The majority of the students, or 27 in total, agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The rest of the answers were neutral (3), while 4 students disagreed and 2 strongly disagreed with this statement.

Statement 9: **I learnt new things while preparing for the course exams.** The answers were as follows: 13 students agreed, 10 were neutral and 13 disagreed.

Statement 10: **I use the feedback for revising,** was answered in the following way: 16 students agreed, 14 were neutral and 6 disagreed.

Statement 11: **I am only interested in the grades. (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). I never read the additional comments / feedback).** The answers were as follows: 6 students agreed, 6 opted for the neutral answer and the majority of them (24) disagreed.

Statement 12: **I would probably forget most of the things I learned if we don't have exams,** was answered in the following way: 4 students agreed, 10 were neutral and 22 disagreed.

Statement 13: **The assessment has positive impact on my learning. The answers obtained were as follows:** 20 students agreed, 6 were neutral and 8 disagreed, while 2 strongly disagreed with the statement.

First, it has to be emphasized that the results obtained from the questionnaire statements illustrate the complexity of the relationship between assessment and learning described in the literature review.

According to the questionnaire results summarized above, it can be concluded that a slight majority of students, according to their perceptions and answers, focus on learning more effectively and spend more time learning during the time period when the course assignments are due. It has to be added that a significant number of students, although a minority, disagreed or remained neutral. In terms of focusing on the assessed assignments, the results are not conclusive, since the distribution of answers was almost identical, which might be interpreted in several ways: either the students do not focus only on assessed assignments or they do not focus on the assessed assignments at all. Still, a majority of them believed that working on assignments in general helps them to practice and reflect upon the material covered in class.

It can be concluded that students view continuous assessment and tasks assigned and assessed as a process that has positive impact on their learning. According to their perceptions, they also believe that assessment makes them think more about the assignment and practice what they have learned upon the successful completion of it. However, students expect clear instructions and guidelines when working on assignments and believe that instructions and explanations facilitate learning, since a vast majority of the students agreed that clear instructions help them learn.

There are no conclusive results regarding the summative assessments tasks, since almost the same number of students agreed, disagreed or remained neutral when answering the questions related to exams, meaning that almost the same number of students thought that exams advance their learning, hamper

their learning or had no impact on their learning. Students remained divided when they stated their perceptions about learning new things when preparing for the exam, although the majority of the students were certain that their learning would be successful even without course exams.

On the other hand, the results were sufficiently clear as far as feedback and formative assessment is concerned. It can be concluded that the majority of the students pay attention to the feedback and formative assessment and they consider feedback to be important. According to their answers, they do not focus only on final grades, but they also focus on teachers' comments and additional remarks. In addition, students' belief is that faculty feedback facilitates their understanding and it is useful for revising of the material covered. Still, a significant number of students disagreed or remained neutral regarding feedback and the usefulness of it. These results probably indicate that the quality (or the lack of it) of the feedback or the timeliness of the feedback should be taken into consideration as factors which might impair the positive impact of feedback on students' learning.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be concluded that assessment determines students' approach to learning and facilitates learning provided that a number of conditions are created in the process of planning, designing and conducting assessment.

Applying a **wide range of assessment practices** is one of the ways to achieve balanced assessment which should be appropriate and correspond to learning objectives. This means that a combination of formative assessment (applying feedback) classroom assessment (activities which are assessed and done in class) and summative assessment (tests, exams and quizzes), would probably produce the best results in terms of learning as well as the most objective results. In addition, when designing a course assessment method, it is important to match the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Therefore, the learning outcomes need to be carefully planned and analyzed, after which a suitable selection of assessment methods can follow. For instance, if one of the learning objectives is to introduce presentation skills to students and the outcome is to expect students to deliver an effective presentation according to a set of defined criteria, a suitable assessment would involve students in delivering oral or Power Point presentation which would be assessed accordingly and not by having a mid-term/ final exam only.

Providing **appropriate number of tasks** which will be assessed is another way to facilitate students' learning. According to Innis (1996) students spend between 0.3 and 1.0 hours for each hour in class, which does not correspond to teachers' expectations who expect approximately 2.0 hours per each hour spent in class. According to the same study, courses which generate more effective and in terms of hours longer study effort apply smaller, but more frequent assessed tasks (reports, written tasks). This means that assessment can be based, instead on one or two exams (mid-term, final) on a number of various tasks, each of them assigned and equally distributed throughout the semester.

Applying **detailed and timely feedback** also contributes to students' learning. The importance of feedback or formative assessment has been emphasised over the last two decades as a helpful way to facilitate students' learning. In order to be helpful, feedback has to be provided on a regular basis, on time, and it has to be detailed and specific. This means that feedback has to be provided after each assessed task. The waiting time in between assigning the task and providing the feedback should not be too long. For instance, it might be appropriate to provide feedback in two weeks time after assigning persuasive paragraph writing. However, providing the same feedback after two months will probably produce less significant results in terms of learning, since various tasks were covered and assessed in the meantime. The feedback has to highlight the aspects of the tasks which were positive, the aspects of the task which need to be improved, as well as suggesting ways of improving it. The feedback has to be specific and focus on the projected learning outcomes of the task assessed and the purpose of the assignment. On the other hand, feedback which is too detailed and "picking" on every detail of the task, even on irrelevant elements, produces the opposite effect and could be quite discouraging for the students. The purpose of feedback should be encouraging students to continue learning. In addition, the feedback should be accepted by the students and acted upon by them in terms of learning in the future.

It is useful to apply **peer and self- assessment** which raise students' awareness of the process of learning and the learning objectives. According to Gibbs and Simpson (2004, p.20), peer and self-assessment procedures are useful because: " The real value may lie in students internalizing the standards expected so that they can supervise themselves and improve the quality of their own assignments prior to submitting them". Rubrics and sets of defined criteria can be very helpful in the process of peer and self-assessment since they explain in detail the requirements and expectations for successful completion of assignments and can be easily used for peer and self-correction. Peer and self assessment classroom practice can be improved if the criteria for assessment are transparent and clear to the students and faculty alike, supported with specific examples or models. The criteria should be carefully used when assessing. Students should be given the aims and learning objectives and encouraged to collaborate when engaged in peer and self assessment.

Analysing the existing assessment practices is also useful. This careful analysis of existing methods should involve both diagnosing the potential issues and problems with existing methods, as well as evaluating positive practices. The end result should be making changes to the assessment methods, having in mind that that assessment should be reliable, objective as well as designed to support learning. One possibility when designing assessment methods might involve students and their opinion regarding assessed tasks, criteria and their perceptions of the assessment process designed for a specific course. Via course evaluations or questionnaire at the end of the course, students might be asked to provide their feedback and comments on these aspects of the course and how they might be improved in the future.

Taking these comments into consideration might help the teachers to reflect on and plan the assessment methods to be used in the future.

To conclude, it might not be an easy task for teachers to design assessment which supports learning. However, it is possible to create and use assessment methods which will foster learning provided that we approach assessment in a more open minded way and consider implementing adjustments. Hopefully, these adjustments may encourage students to perceive assessment not as a process which will generate difficulties and obstruct their learning progress, but as a process which will empower them and make them more successful learners.

REFERENCES

1. Angelo, T.A. & Cross, K.P. (1993). *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A handbook for college teachers*, San Francisco, Ca: Jossey-Bass.
2. Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B., William, D. (2004). Working inside the black box: Assessment for learning in the classroom. *PHI DELTA KAPPAN*, Vol. 86, No. 1, 09, p. 8 - 21. Retrieved on June 1st, 2014 from <http://web.uvic.ca/~gtreloar/Assessment/Periodical%20Items/Working%20Inside%20the%20Black%20Box-Assessment%20for%20Learning%20in%20the%20Classroom.pdf>
3. Boud, D. & Falchikov, N. (2007). *Rethinking Assessment in Higher Education- Learning for the longer term*, New York, Routledge.
4. Gibbs, G and Simpson, C. (2004). Conditions under which assessment supports students' learning. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* vol.1 pp.3-31. Retrieved on June 1st, 2014, from <http://www2.glos.ac.uk/offload/tli/lets/lathe/issue1/issue1.pdf>
5. Gibbs, G. & Simpson, C. (2003). Measuring the response of students to assessment: the Assessment Experience Questionnaire. *Proceedings of the 2003 11th International Symposium Improving Students Learning: Theory, Research and Scholarship*, Hinckley, UK 1st - 3rd September 2003, Oxford: Alden Press. Retrieved on June 1st, 2014 from [file:///C:/Users/e.spirovska.SEEU/Downloads/Gibbs_and_Simpson_2003%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/e.spirovska.SEEU/Downloads/Gibbs_and_Simpson_2003%20(1).pdf)
6. Innis, K. (1996). *Diary Survey: How undergraduate full-time students spend their time*, Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University.

APPENDIX 1**STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please put a tick where appropriate. V

	SA (strongly agree)	A (agree)	N (neutral)	D (disagree)	SD (strongly disagree)
1. I do the same amount of study each week. It doesn't matter if I have an assignment.					
2. I only study things that are going to be practiced / used in the assignments.					
3. In weeks when the assignments are due, I study longer and work harder.					
4. I learn more from doing the assignments than from studying the course material.					
5. The assignments which give very clear instructions about what you are expected to do help me learn.					
6. Working on assignments really makes me think and practice the material learned.					
7. The feedback I get from the teachers is useful and helps me learn					
8. The feedback helps me to understand things better.					
9. I learnt new things while preparing for the course exams					
10. I use the feedback for revising.					
11. I am only interested in the grades. (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). I never read the additional comments / feedback).					
12. I would probably forget most of the things I learned if we don't have exams.					
13. The assessment has positive effects on my learning					

Please provide some comments about the way the assessment affected your learning.

APPENDIX 2**RESULTS**

Question	SA (strongly agree)	A (agree)	N (neutral)	D (disagree)	SD (strongly disagree)	Total
1	2	5	10	18	1	36
2	1	9	14	10	2	36
3	2	15	12	6	1	36
4	2	10	8	8	8	36
5	6	20	6	4	0	36
6	6	17	8	4	1	36
7	8	18	2	6	2	36
8	5	22	3	4	2	36
9	4	9	10	9	4	36
10	6	10	14	6	0	36
11	2	4	6	14	10	36
12	2	2	10	8	14	36
13	8	12	6	8	2	36

TAILORING STUDENT ASSESSMENT FOR MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE 1 AT SEEU BASED ON STUDENTS' NEEDS

Blagojka Zdravkovska-Adamova, PhD

b.zdravkovska@seeu.edu.mk

Aleksandra P. Taneska, MA

a.pandilovska@seeu.edu.mk

Renata Stojanovska, teacher

renatce92@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper is focused on the issue of designing grading criteria for Macedonian language 1 (ML1) for the students at South East European University (SEEU) in the Republic of Macedonia. It proceeds from the view that according to the nature of this course, its content should be based on the learners' needs and opportunities. The aim of this paper is to determine grading criteria for ML1 based on the needs and opinions of the students enrolled in this subject. In the theoretical part of the paper we will explain the place of needs analysis in the process of syllabus design and student assessment and its importance in the framework of interest in communicative rather than linguistic competence, having in mind subjective and objective needs. Also we will highlight the significance of students' involvement in creating grading criteria. The theoretical part is a basis for our empirical study and research. The research in this paper is presented through the results of the survey. The survey was conducted among 193 students from the first year at SEEU in the 2013/2014 school year to obtain the necessary information about their expectations of the course and their learning processes, and about their opinion for grading criteria. In this part we will also describe how the survey was designed. Finally, we will provide our future plans for other subjects at SEEU connected with the Macedonian language such as Macedonian language 2 and Macedonian as a foreign language.

Key words: *assessment, needs based analysis, grading criteria*

Introduction

Language teachers are continually involved with the challenge of identifying students' needs in order for them to learn language faster, easier and more efficiently. Needs assessment suggests to teachers what students need to learn, and it forms the basis for the selection of content, teaching materials and methods, types of exercises and relevant issues for grading criteria. This paper is focused on the issue of designing grading criteria for Macedonian language 1 (ML1) for the students at South East European University (SEEU) in the Republic of Macedonia. It proceeds from the view that according to the nature of this course, its content should be based on the learners' needs and opportunities.

The place of needs analysis in the process of syllabus design and tailoring student assessment

Important questions in the process of syllabus design and tailoring student assessment are: What are my students' needs? What will my student need to do or learn to achieve the goals of the syllabus? What will I include in my syllabus? How will I measure their progress and how will I tailor students' assessment? In that case we should have in mind that "...students' needs are a complex issue open to interpretation." (Graves, 1996:12) So, towards that end, we should "involve seeking and interpreting information about one's students' needs so that the course will address them effectively." (Graves, 1996:12) Language assessment is designed to measure how well language skills are improved through classes.

The aim of the research

The aim of this paper is to determine grading criteria for ML1 based on the needs and opinions of the students enrolled in this subject. In the theoretical part of the paper we will explain the place of needs analysis in the process of syllabus design and students' assessment and its importance in the framework of interest in communicative rather than linguistic competence, having in mind objective and subjective needs.

Objective needs are the starting point which "refers to needs which are derivable from different kinds of factual information about learners, their use of language in real-life communication situations as well as their current language proficiency and language difficulties." (Brindley, 1989:70) Subjective needs are also very important because, according to Brindley (1989) they are:

"the cognitive and affective needs of the learner in the learning situation, derivable from information about affective and cognitive factors such as personality, confidence, attitudes, learners' wants and expectation" having in mind "individual cognitive style and learning strategies."

Also, we will highlight the significance of student involvement in creating grading criteria. The theoretical part is a basis for our empirical study and research. The process of realisation of our research

will help us in identifying students' needs, collecting information, and interpreting the results of the survey.

Organizing and designing the survey and research

For the purpose of our research we have included the following specific technique and instrument. The research in this paper is presented through the results of the survey. The survey, in the form of an anonymous questionnaire as a research method, is used to obtain relevant data on tailoring students' assessment for ML1 at SEEU based on students' needs. The survey is developed to address specific concerns connected with tailoring students' assessment for ML1. The survey was designed in two parts (Basic personal information and Main questions). It was realised from September 23 until September 27, in both campuses in Tetovo and Skopje. In the survey, in the first part titled Basic Personal Information, we included four questions about some personal information (gender, age, place of living, and faculty) and one question about more Macedonian language usage. The main part of the survey, titled Main Questions, contains 13 questions which concerned the Macedonian language. The time for completing this survey was limited to 20 minutes. Each professor was responsible for the process of realising the survey, which included printing samples of the survey, informing the students of the method and purpose of the survey, and also of the goals and results of the survey. Questions were multiple choice, but there was also an option of sharing different attitudes and opinions about the questions.

In our paper we will explain all 13 questions which are very much relevant for grading criteria for ML1 and which helped us to design assessment according to students' opinions and needs. A working example questionnaire is provided at the end of our paper (translated into English). The survey was conducted among 193 non-native Macedonian speaking first-year students at SEEU in the 2013/2014 school year to obtain the necessary information about their expectations of the course and their learning processes and about their opinions of grading criteria. One must always bear in mind that, according to Kelly (2006):

“When considering the use of surveys, keep in mind that surveys normally rely on self-reported data and assume that respondents will provide candid and honest answers. As such, surveys are subjective instruments that work best when those being surveyed fully understand the purposes for which the survey data will be used.”

The results of the survey

FIRST PART - BASIC PERSONAL INFORMATION

Basic personal information -Gender

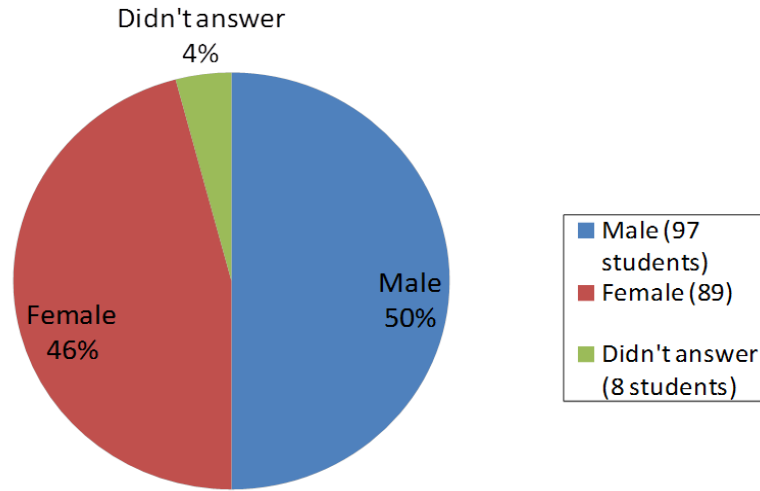


Chart 1: Basic personal information - Gender

The first question from the first part of the survey (Chart 1) refers to the gender of the students. We are very satisfied with the survey because it covered an almost equal number of respondents from both genders (97 male students, or 50 % of the respondents; females were 89, or 46%). Eight students did not give answers.

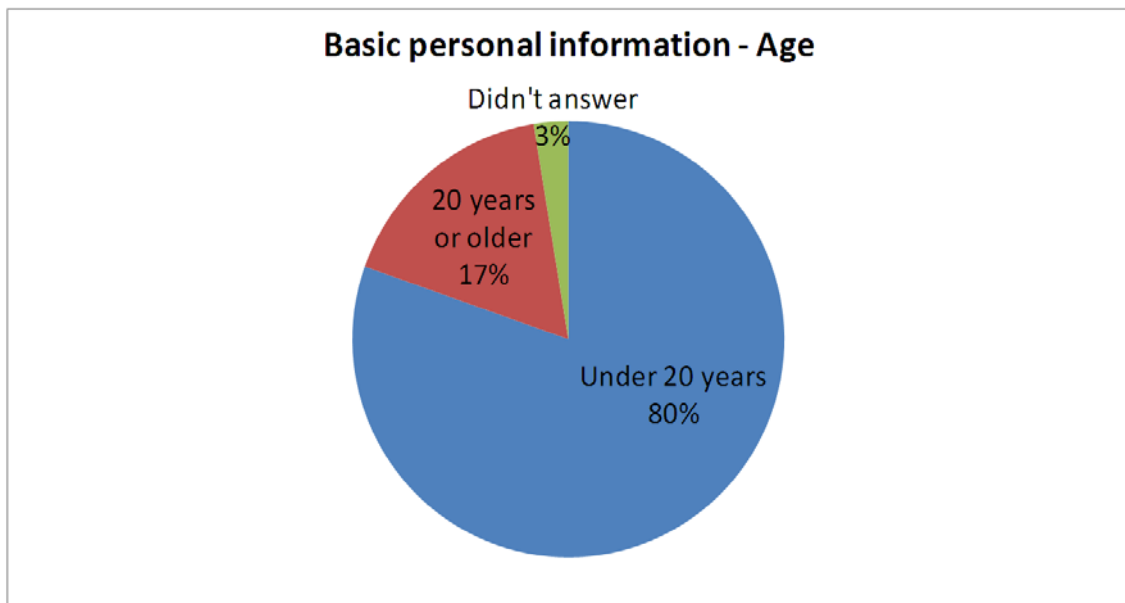


Chart 2: Basic personal information - Age

In terms of age (Chart 2), a majority of them are under the age of twenty (156 students, or 80%). 33 respondents are more than 20 years old (17%). Five respondents did not answer.

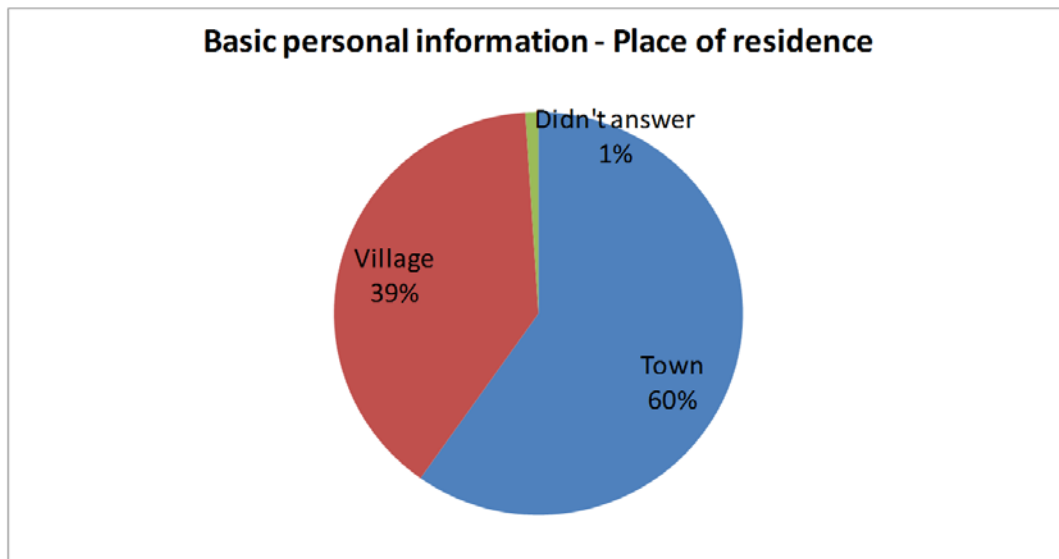


Chart 3: Basic personal information - Place of residence

The third chart contains responses relating to the place of residence. A significantly greater number of students are from cities, or 116 students. 39% of respondents (76 students) are from villages, and two students did not answer this question.

Basic personal information – Faculty

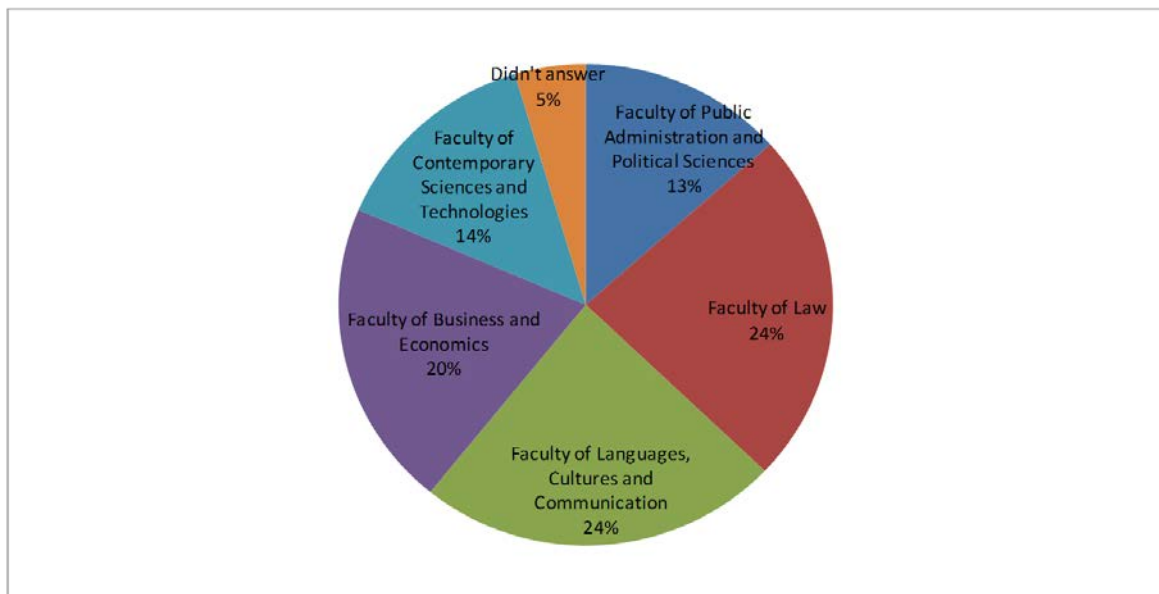


Chart 4: Basic personal information – Faculty

The fourth chart presents data on the faculty in which the students are enrolled. We found it particularly important to have respondents from each faculty. Most of them are from the Faculty of Law and Faculty of Languages, Cultures and Communication (24 % both). Twenty per cent (40) are from the Faculty of Business and Economics. Fewer respondents are from the Faculty of Contemporary Sciences and Technologies (27 students - 14 %) and Faculty of Public Administration and Political Sciences (26 students - 13 %). 9 students did not answer (5 %).

Where did you use Macedonian language most?

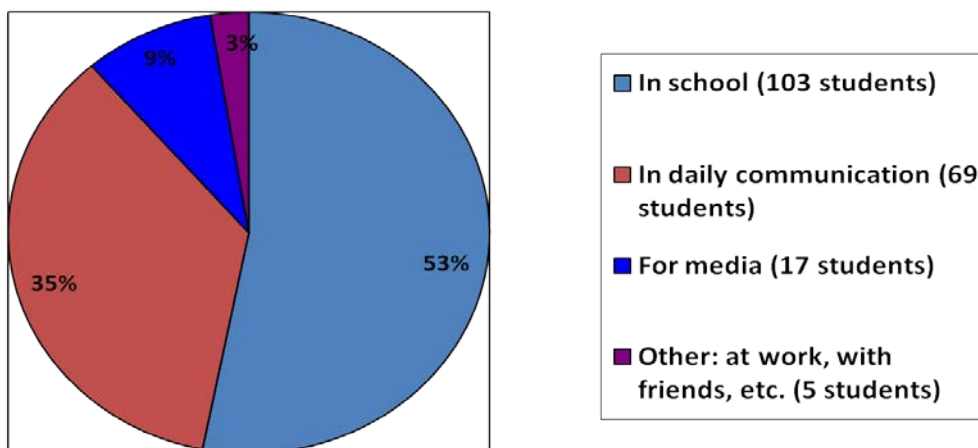


Chart 5: Basic Personal Information - The use of Macedonian language

The last question is connected with the use of Macedonian language. More than half of respondents (103 or 53%) reported that they used Macedonian in school. In daily communication ML was used by 69 students (35%) and for tracking media 17 students (9%). 5 students (3%) answered Other, that is, they specified that they used the Macedonian language at work (2), with friends (2), and one student did not reply.

SECOND PART - MAIN QUESTIONS

Question 1

How well do you know Macedonian at this point?

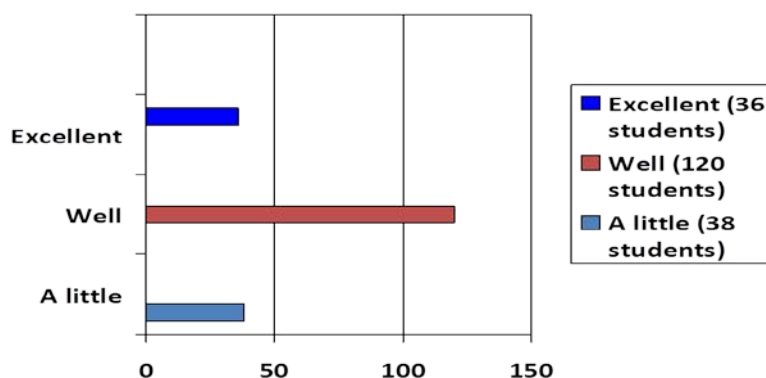


Chart 6: Question 1

For the first question of the second part almost two thirds of respondents (120 students) answered that they knew Macedonian well. Approximately the same number of students answered that they had an excellent command of the language (36) or very little (38). Students arrive in the classroom with varied educational backgrounds in terms of language proficiency. Different levels of knowledge of the language greatly complicate the determination of appropriate tasks, tailored to the capabilities of all students enrolled for this course. We also need to consider the fact that each student has a different individual personality that affects instruction. In that case, the best solution is to choose a “model for multilevel instruction requiring the teacher to choose a topic and then develop different lessons with different objectives for different proficiency levels in his/her classroom” (Roberts, 2007). This model is possible in small classrooms, and more challenging for groups with more than 25 students, as in our case.

Question 2

Which language skill do you know best?

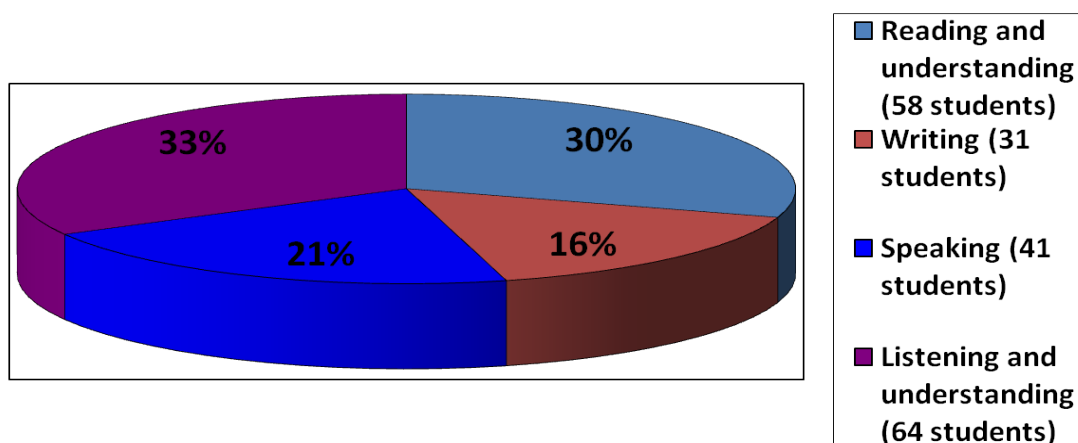


Chart 7: Question 2

Chart 7 presents the answers for the second question. It concerns the particular language skill knowledge. Most of the respondents answered that they were strongest in the following two language skills: listening and understanding (64 students - 33 %) and reading and understanding (58 students - 30 %). According to our data, 41 (21%) students chose speaking, and fewer respondents declared writing to be their strongest skill, only 16 % (31 students). That was the reason why, when we designed the syllabus, we included more activities for improving writing (orthographical rules, professional letters, paragraphs) and speaking (debates, exercises for oral communication). It also reflected tailoring to other students' needs (more detail will be presented in charts 11 and 12).

Question 3

Which language skill do you think you should improve?

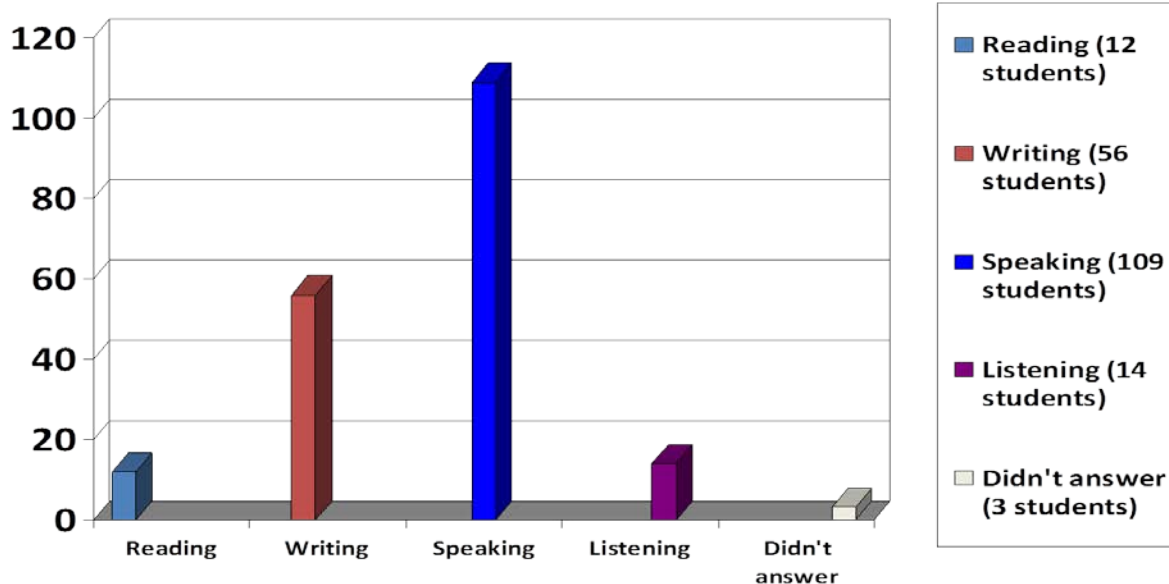


Chart 8: Question 3

This question is directly connected with the previous issue in question two. In this regard, the obtained data are connected and helped us a lot in creating the syllabus for ML1, and in planning and teaching lessons for developing speaking and writing skills. More than half of the respondents (109 students) reported that they wanted to improve their speaking skills and more than one quarter of the respondents opted for writing (56). 12 to 14 students opted for listening and reading. This question was not answered by 3 students.

Question 4

What do you want most to be included in this subject?

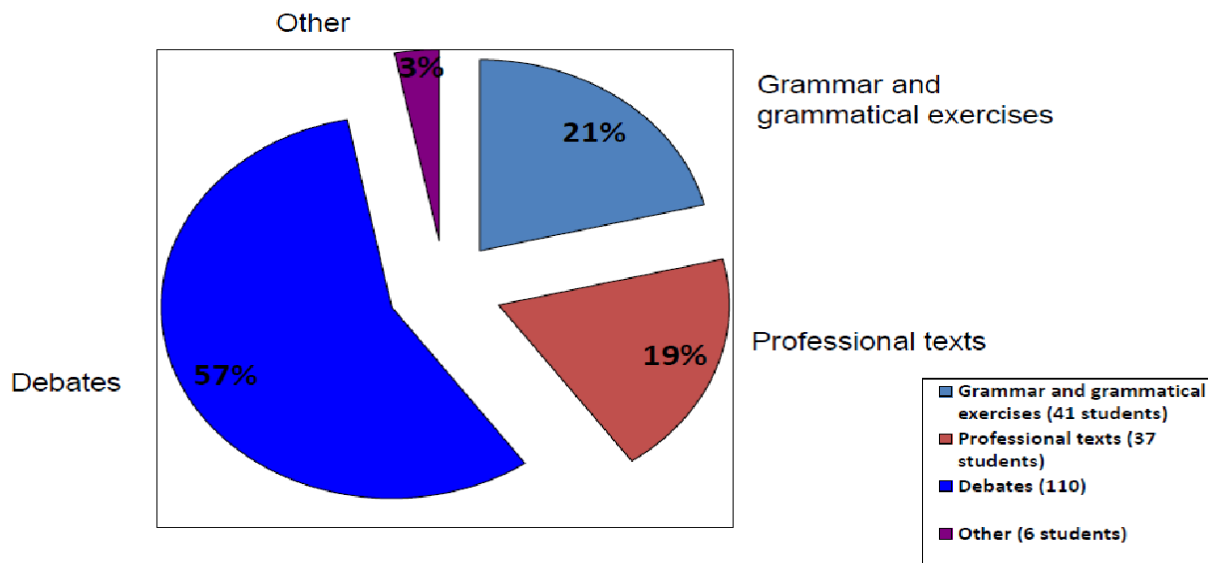


Chart 9: Question 4

The fourth question was very helpful for us in designing the syllabus and tailoring students’ assessment. Significant numbers of respondents (110 students - 57 %) chose to have a debate. According to us, this high percentage is an indication that their expectations are through this subject to improve their own skills for speaking, but also to perfect their own communicative skills. Although it was not in line with our expectations, having in mind our previous experience, one-fifth of respondents (41 students - 21 %) decided on grammar and grammar exercises. Slightly fewer respondents, according to the answers, were expecting professional texts to be included in the syllabus (37 students - 19 %). Six students answered that everything mentioned before should be included in classes for this subject.

Question 5

What don’t you like to have in the framework of this subject?

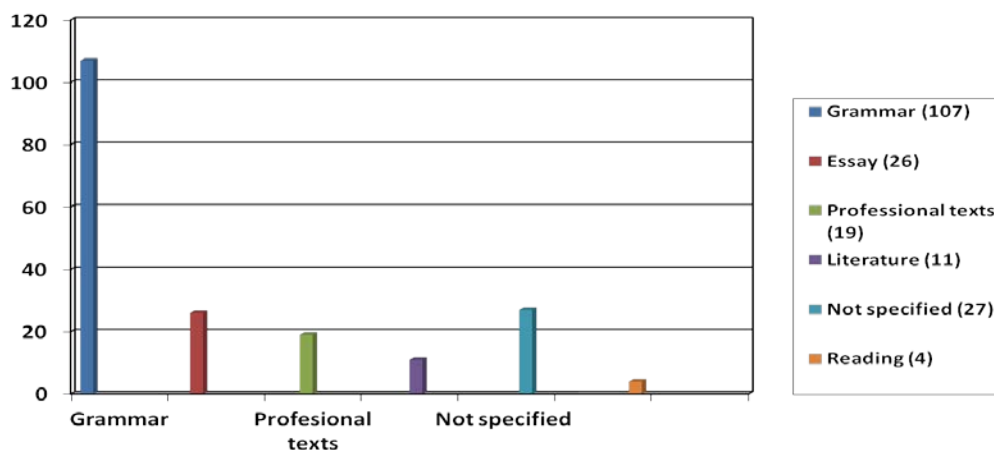


Chart 10: Question 5

Chart 10 presents students' opinions in terms of what students did not like to have in the framework of this subject. According to our expectations, we have a great number of respondents (107) who do not want the grammar to be covered in ML1 classes. Almost an equal number of respondents said essays (26), or did not specify (27). 19 students did not expect professional texts to be included in the syllabus, and 11 did not want to have literature. Only four students did not want reading to be a part of the programme.

Question 6

On which topic would you like to have a debate?

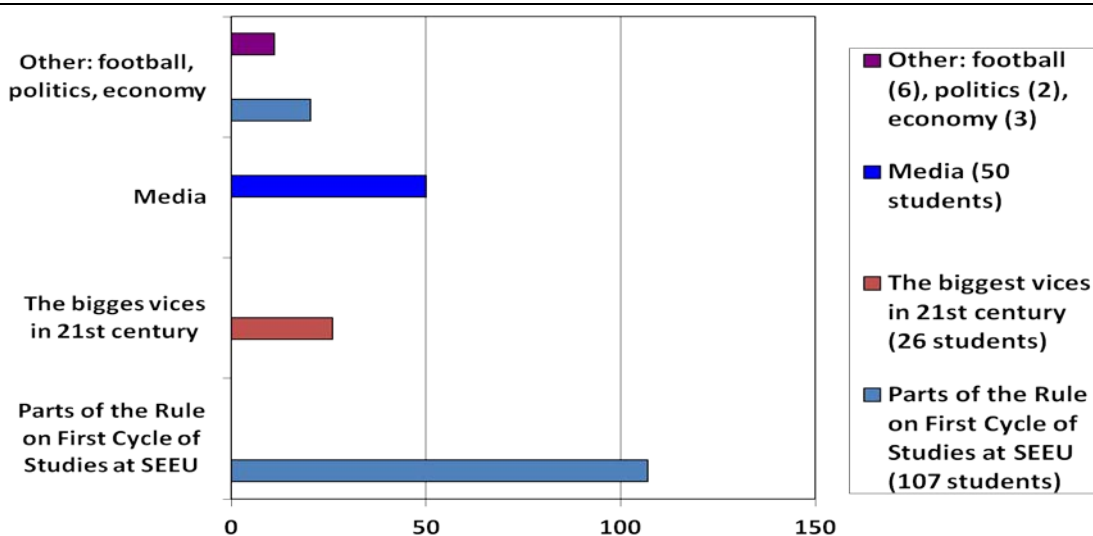


Chart 11: Question 6

For us, it was very important that more than 50% of the respondents thought that debating parts of the Rule of First Cycle of Studies at SEEU would be very useful and we accepted their opinion. The debate was realised in two parts. First, the students were divided in several groups. Each group was responsible for explaining lesser known words and analysing and presenting their part of the Rule to students from other groups. Presentations were well structured. After finishing this task, they could respond confidently and spontaneously to complex questions from the other students. Then they stated whether or not they agreed. Students stressed that before the debate, they were not thoroughly familiar with this topic and that they had gathered really important information through the debate.

Significant numbers of students declared that they would like to debate about media, but the curricula for ML1 included only one debate. 26 students were for the topic 'The biggest vices in the 21st century', and for other topics 11 students.

Question 7

On which topic would you like to have an oral presentation?

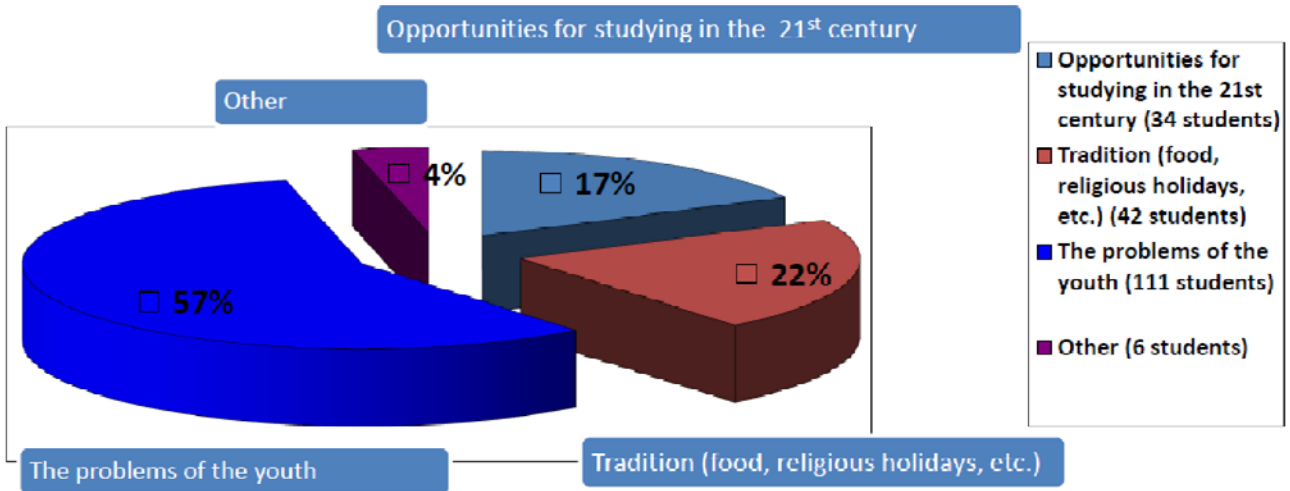


Chart 12: Question 7

In the framework of this subject, in the curricula, it is stated that 20% of their final grade will be based on an oral presentation. From the topics that were offered to the students, 57 % of the respondents (111 students) thought that the problems of youth would be a good topic for oral presentation. However, we thought that it would be easier for them to choose between this topic and the other two offered topics, or ‘Tradition’ (22% - 42 students) and ‘Opportunities for Studying in the 21st Century’ (17 % - 34 students).

Question 8

What do you expect after finishing this subject?

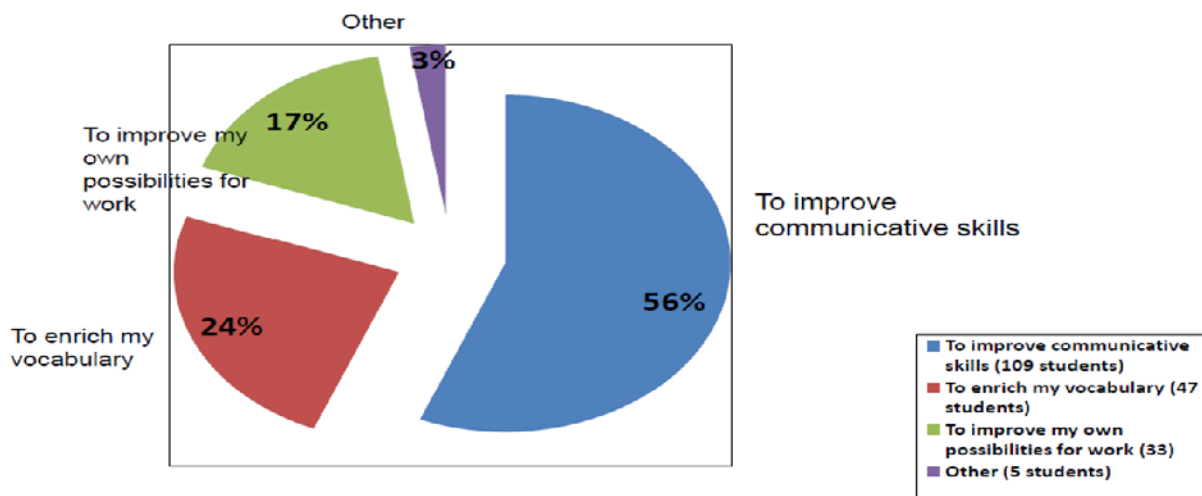


Chart 13: Question 8

Most of the respondents (56%) expect through the subject ML1 to improve their communicative skills. Significant numbers of students want to enrich their vocabulary (24%) and to improve their own possibilities for work (17%). 5 students (3%) chose 'Other' without specifying what.

Question 9

In class, the most important issue is to learn the structure of:

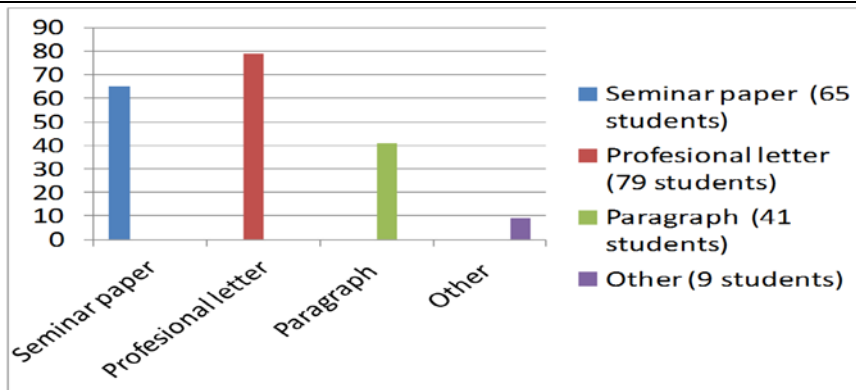


Chart 14: Question 9

It is clear in Chart 14 that the students have a need to learn the structure of professional letters (79 students) which are very important for their future careers. This is why we included one type of professional letter in the syllabus - a Letter of Request. Their opinion was that this was very useful for them, and they used this type of letter for making changes to a schedule, requesting a grade change and requesting new terms for colloquiums.

A high number of the respondents pleaded for a seminar paper (65). 41 students asked for paragraphs, and 9 students chose 'Other'.

Question 10

What is the most relevant thing to the final grade?

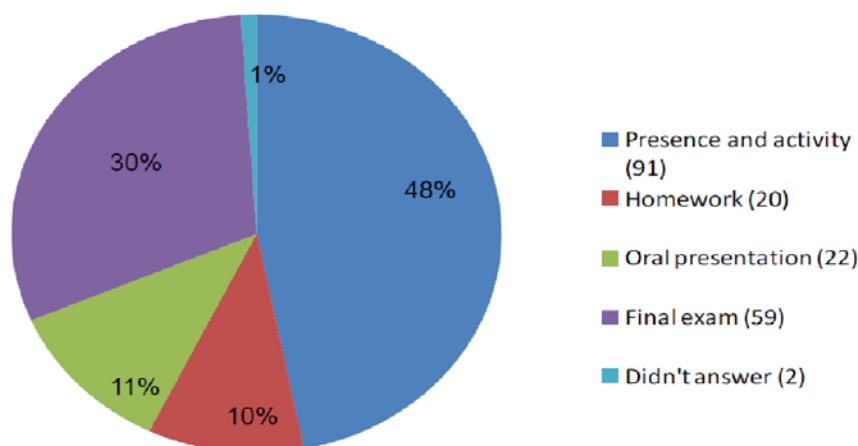


Chart 15: Question 10

We very surprised by the answers from question 10 (Chart 15) because we have a very big percentage of answers (48%) that presence and activity are most relevant to the final grade. 59 students (30%) thought that the final exam was the most relevant thing (according to our syllabus it was 30%). For 22 students, it was the oral presentation, and 20 students stated homework. We did not get answers from 2 students.

Question 11

According to the University criteria you need 51% to pass the final exam. According to you that is :

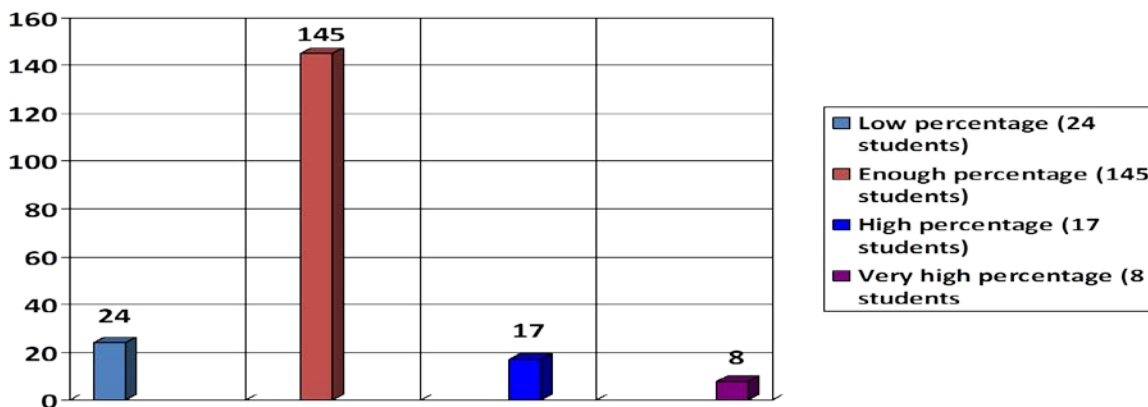


Chart 16: Question 11

Respondents gave the most positive answers to this question: 145 students agreed that a minimum of 51% were enough percentage points to pass an exam at SEEU. Only 24 students thought that it was a low percentage. For 17 students, this criterium was a high percentage, and for 8 it was a very high percentage.

Question 12

Why do you need to know Macedonian language in the future?

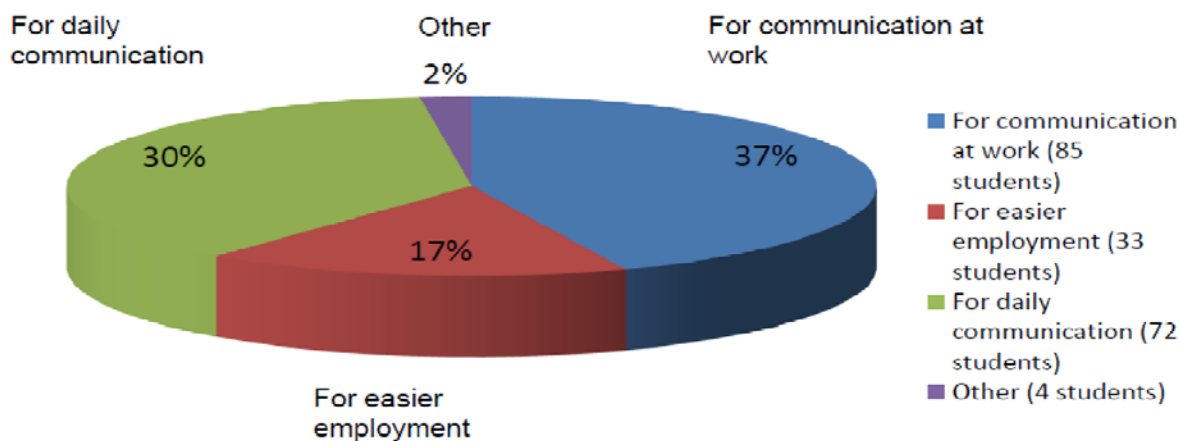


Chart 17: Question 12

Of the highest importance for learning Macedonian language was the need for communication at work (37%) and for daily communication (30%). With knowledge of ML it will be easier to find work was the reason for 17%, and 4 students (2%) answered that it is necessary to know Macedonian because they live in the Republic of Macedonia.

Question 13

Where do you want to work after graduation?

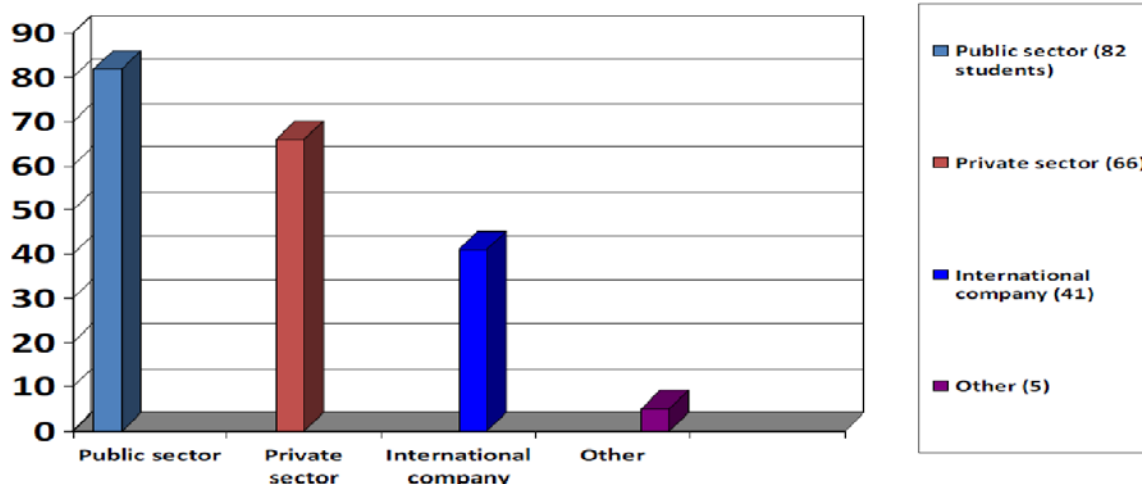


Chart 18: Question 13

After graduation, according to our data, most of the students would like to work in the public sector (government, court, university etc.), or 82 students. 66 were interested to work in the private sector, and 44 in an international company. 5 students stated that they would like to work in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Conclusions

Students and teachers are important partners in the assessment process. Teachers can help students to understand assessment and grading criteria and students can help teachers to create the most appropriate criteria according to their needs. Students' involvement in creating grading criteria is very important.

Through the survey, we obtain significant information about tailoring students' assessment for Macedonian language 1. The data obtained data helped us a lot for planning and teaching lessons for developing speaking and writing skills.

Students arrive in the classroom with varied educational backgrounds in terms of language proficiency. Different levels of knowledge of the language greatly complicate the determination of appropriate tasks, tailored to the capabilities of all students enrolled for this course. We do not have statistical data about percentages from previous years, but we strongly believe that the students showed much better results and they were better prepared concerning oral presentations and debates. These conclusions might be

relevant for other subjects at SEEU connected with Macedonian language such as Macedonian language 2 and Macedonian as a foreign language.

We have worked for many years to provide appropriate material and to tailor various assessment techniques and we will continue to improve that in the future. To ensure greater efficiency and greater success of Macedonian language classes, we offer students the material that will be useful in their future work and in life in general. For us, it is important to cooperate with our students and that is the reason why we gave them the opportunity to express themselves in terms of the evaluation criteria that were offered, which we later realized fully. For us, the whole process was successful and it met our requirements and expectations.

REFERENCES

1. Brindley, G. (1989). *The role of needs analysis in adult ESL programme design*. In R.K. Johnson (Ed.). *The second language curriculum* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Graves, K. (1996). *A framework of course development process*. In K. Graves (ed.) *Teachers as course developers*. Cambridge University Press.
3. Kelly, M. G. (2006). *Resources for Student Assessment*. ISTE.
4. Roberts, M. (2007). *Teaching in the Multilevel Classroom*. Person Education, Inc.
5. http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/download/adulted/multilevel_monograph.pdf

APENDIX 1: SURVEY FOR THE STUDENTS

SURVEY

Dear students,

The data from this survey will help us to structure the syllabus for **Macedonian language 1** at SEEU according to your language knowledge and expectations and to determine and tailor assessment criteria. For that reason we are asking you to give honest answers. The survey is anonymous. THANK YOU.

Basic personal information

Circle and complete:

- Gender:** male female
- Age:** Under 20 years 20 years or older
- Residence** City _____ Village _____
- Faculty:** a. Faculty of Public Administration and Political Sciences
 b. Faculty of Law
 c. Faculty of Languages, Cultures and Communication
 d. Faculty of Business and Economics
 e. Faculty of Contemporary Sciences and Technologies

Where did you use Macedonian language most?

- a. in school
- б. in daily communication
- B. for media
- r. other (precise) _____

Please circle the appropriate answer according to your opinion or complete where it is necessary:

1. How well do you know Macedonian at this point:

- a. A little b. Well c. Excellent

2. Which language skill do you know best:

- a. Reading b. Writing c. Speaking d. Listening

3. Which language skill do you think you should improve:

- a. Reading b. Writing c. Speaking d. Listening

4. What do you want most to be included in this subject:

- a. Grammar and grammar exercise
- b. Professional texts
- c. Debates
- d. Other (precise) _____

5. What don't you like to have in the framework of this subject:

6. On which topic would you like to have a debate:

- a. Parts of the Rule on First Cycle of Studies at SEEU
- b. The biggest vices in 21st century
- c. Media
- d. Other (precise) _____

7. On which topic would you like to have an oral presentation:

- a. Opportunities for studying in 21st century
- b. Tradition (food, religious holidays, etc.)
- c. The problem of the youth
- d. Other (precise) _____

8. What do you expect after finishing this subject:

- a. To improve communicative skills
- b. To enrich my vocabulary
- c. To improve my own possibilities for work
- d. Other (precise) _____

9. In class, the most important issue is to learn the structure of:

- a. Seminar paper
- b. Professional letter
- c. Paragraph
- d. Other (precise) _____

10. What is the most relevant thing to the final grade:

- a. Presence and activity
- b. Homework
- c. Oral presentation
- d. Final grade

11. According to the University criteria you need 51% to pass the final exam. According to you that is:

- a. A low percentage
- b. Enough percentage
- c. A high percentage
- d. A very high percentage

12. Why do you need to know Macedonian language in the future:

- a. For communication at work
- b. For easier employment
- c. For daily communication
- d. Other (precise) _____

13. Where do you want to work after graduation:

- a. Public sector (government, court, university, etc.)
- b. Private sector
- c. International company
- d. Other (precise) _____

A PLATFORM FOR AUTOMATIC ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAMMING ASSIGNMENTS

Faton Mehmedi

fatonmehmedi@gmail.com

Visar Shehu

v.shehu@seeu.edu.mk

Adrian Besimi

a.besimi@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract

In any computer science curricula, the courses that deal with programming, programming languages and software development, in general, are of major importance. The majority of such courses aim to teach students best practices in programming by using problem solving approaches. Since students are required to learn a number of programming languages, methods and technologies, it is very important for them to get hands on experience and to be acquainted with real life problems. For this purpose, lecturers will often rely on assessing students through diverse programming assignments. The main problem with this approach is the limitation of the lecturer to evaluate all these assignments. This paper presents a system that aims to alleviate this problem. The system was developed for the purpose of organizing programming competitions, but also collecting, evaluating, grading and detecting plagiarism in programming assignments. The system does not suffer from the limitations of manual grading: it is capable of quickly grading large numbers of assignments; it applies the same criteria for all assignments and its modular design allows support of multiple programming languages. Therefore, this platform is not only novelty in what it does, but also a tool that can be used by the community and any technology enthusiast. This paper also discusses the architecture of the system, its main modules and the advantages of the systems. The modules of the system are: the judging module used for automatic assessment and plagiarism checking and the web interface used to support user activities in the system.

Keywords: *evaluation, plagiarism detection, automatic grading, programming*

Problem Definition

Programming represents one of the basic skills acquired in computer science (CS) curricula. Therefore, in every university, it is unimaginable to have a CS programme which does not extensively cover programming courses.

It is generally accepted that this skill cannot be acquired without the practical involvement of students (Braught, 2008). Therefore, it is a common practice for lecturers to offer a combined theoretical and practical approach in teaching such courses. One of the most popular methods of involving students in solving practical problems is through homework assignments. However, a problem arises when lecturers want to evaluate homework assignments and projects. This is especially true for large groups of students, which is often the case in popular programming courses.

Literature review

The history of automatic judging systems is strongly correlated with the appearance of competitions in the field of computer science. Even though our research focuses on development of judging system as a tool in aiding education, it is important to study the history of judging systems as applied in judging solutions for programming competitions.

Competitions of this character, for the first time, appeared during the 1970s (ACM, 2013). The aim of such competitions was to encourage young talent in the field, and usually such competitions have been exclusively in the field of programming.

In the history of programming competitions, the oldest competitions are those organized by the Association for Computing Machinery – International Collegiate Programming Contest (ACM-ICPC). The first competition was held in Texas A&M University. The competition evolved in its current form of multilayered competitions in 1977. Since 1989, these types of competitions have had a global outreach, including, in 2005, 84 countries.

In a typical ICPC competition (Arefin, 2006), teams consist of three university students, who are required to solve a set of programming problems in a limited amount of time. There is a limit of only three programming languages (C, C++ or Java) and competitors can work from a single computer only. Solutions are judged by professional judges, in a process that requires compiling the code, executing the programme and comparing the output results with a set of pre-defined results. A solution is accepted only if it passes all test cases. There is also a limitation in the time required to execute the solutions. Managing multiple solutions has posed a challenge for these types of competitions, and this is why there has been some software implemented to automatically check the solutions. For ICPC competitions, the widely used automatic assessment system is the PC2 system (PC2, 2013). However, this system requires a combined manual effort in order to assess the assignments, which is why ICPC competitions still employ a number of human judges for the assessment process.

Other systems have also been developed by universities for the purpose of automatic assessment of programming assignments. Most notably, the University of Valladolid in Spain (Mares, 2009) is one of the pioneers in this field. They have been actively using automatic assessment software, supported by a web-based archive of assignment solutions from past competitions.

Research objectives

The main objectives of this research are:

- Studying existing systems: Knowing that there are similar solutions elsewhere, we wanted to evaluate them and establish their strength and weaknesses;
- Implementing a new design that will benefit from the best practices of existing systems and introduce new features;
- Implementing a secure solution, that will not endanger the servers where code will be executed;
- Ability to add new programming languages on demand (not limited to only a pre-defined set of languages);
- Introducing plagiarism detection systems – especially important since this was part of assessing the student assignments;
- Implementing the system as a web platform – accessible and free to anyone;
- Introducing a module for exercises so that students would be able to exercise and improve their skills from a dynamic set of assignments.

System architecture

We have envisioned building our platform as a web-based solution. This will improve communication with the web users and be advantageous towards other systems (e.g., PC2) which are implemented as a desktop application. The most important advantages of this system are. Firstly, there is no need for installation – The user only needs a link to the web site. Secondly, quicker and simpler updates of the system are possible. Finally, one has the ability to access the system from anywhere, independent of the user platform. Additionally, the system will be designed to support a responsive user interface which makes it automatically adaptable to any screen size.

The web will be implemented to support two types of users, general users and administrators. The general users will be able to access the site free and will be able to solve some of the presented problems and compete in a competition. The administrators will be able to post new assignments, create competitions, view reports for particular users and particular problems.

The judging module

The judge is the main component of the system. Its job is to automatically evaluate/assess submitted solutions. The process of judging solutions is complex and involves a number of activities such as finding

automatic assignment solutions that have not been evaluated, judging a posted assignment solution and checking for plagiarism. These activities are fulfilled by various components of the system.

Due to the advancement in technology and the introduction of microprocessors with multiple cores architecture, it is possible to design systems that will execute multiple tasks in a parallel fashion. Therefore, the architecture of our system is envisioned to support multi-core platforms. In this way, one will be able to execute multiple judging processes autonomously.

There are three important components of the judging module:

- The judge service (or daemon in *nix systems)
- The judge core application
- Plagiarism detection system

In figure 1, we see how the judging process works as a service. It runs only a single instance, and its job is to distribute solutions that have not been evaluated towards any available judge. In case no available judges exist, the service will stall and wait for the next judge to be available.

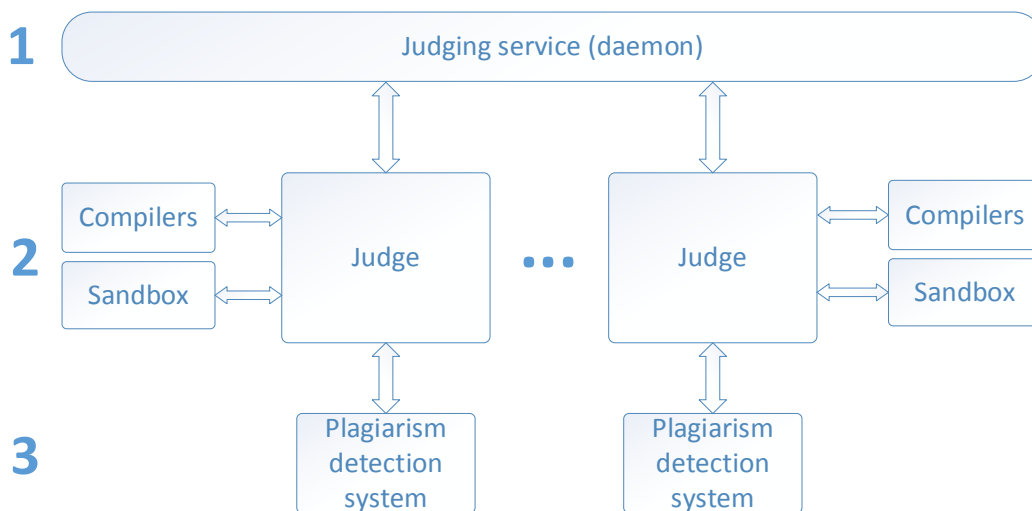


Figure1- The judge diagram

As a second module, the judge is responsible for the actual evaluation of assignment solutions. Figure 2 shows a diagram depicting the functioning of the judging module. The system can have one or multiple modules, depending on the available CPU cores of the running machine. This module consists of two components:

- *Compilers* – a sub module that tries to compile the assignment solutions (the code). If there are compile errors, the process will stop and the information will be recorded in the database.
- *Sandbox* – this is a novel environment that we have implemented. Here successfully compiled solutions are executed with specific input values. It allows execution of arbitrary code (a requirement of our system) but without endangering the entire system. The code executed is entirely separated from the operating system.

After the execution of the solution (the code) is completed, the judge will analyze the output from the solution against a set of pre-defined outputs. In case of a correct solution, the third module is invoked, the plagiarism detection module. By using similarity testing, it compares the amount of similarities with other solutions in the system. If there is a similarity higher than a given threshold, the information is sent back to the judge and stored in the database.

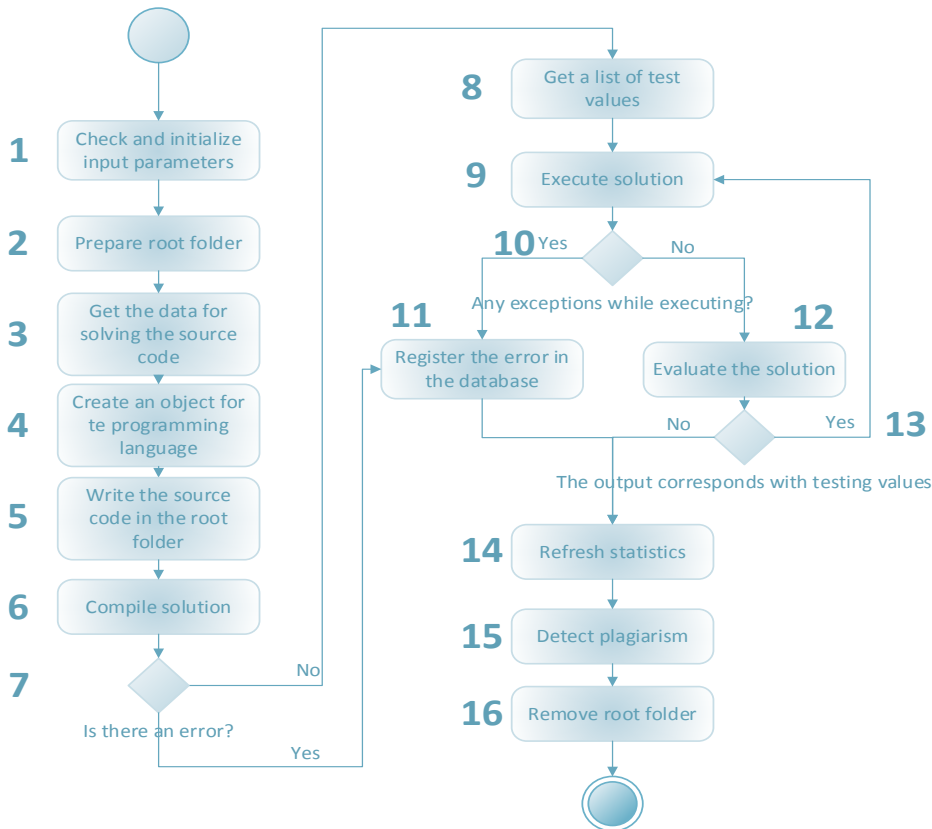


Figure 2– Activity diagram of the judge module

Supported programming languages and the compiling process

The judging module is implemented so it can be scaled up to support numerous programming languages. Adding support for a new language should be easy and should not require alteration of the source code of the application. The process for adding a new language is done by adding the appropriate class in the source code that implements the `ILanguage` interface (see listing 1). No other changes are required.

```

1 interface ILanguage
2 {
3     string LanguageExtension { get; }
4     string CompilerName { get; }
5     string CompilerArguments { get; }
6     string ExecuteCommand { get; }
7     string SimName { get; }
  
```

Listing 1 - The source code of the `ILanguage` interface

As one can see above, to add a new programming language one must add a class to implement the ILanguage interface with the following supported methods:

- LanguageExtension – The extension of the programming language.
- CompilerName – Compiler name, will be used for choosing the appropriate compiler.
- CompilerArguments – Arguments that will be passed to the compiler.
- ExecuteCommand – Command used to execute the solution.
- SimName – This parameter is used for the plagiarism detection module. This parameter defines the type of tool that will be used to detect plagiarism.

After compiling, the interface will respond with the following statuses:

- The process ended without errors – If there are no syntax errors then the status of the solution is set to: "compilation was completed without errors". The next process will be to evaluate the solution.
- The process ended with mistakes – this status will be given if the code had syntax errors. In this case, the system will not continue evaluating the solution.

At the time of writing this paper, the application supports eight programming languages: C, C++, Java, Pascal, C#, PHP, Python and Perl. The number of supported languages is far greater than competing systems.

Executing a solution from the sandbox environment

Successfully compiled codes of assignment solutions are set to be tested for their accuracy. This is done by executing the solution and evaluating the output of the programme. In some cases, there will be runtime errors or the output will exceed a certain pre-defined threshold. In these cases, the system will mark the solution as incorrect. In this regard, there are outcomes that the system will consider:

- Regular finish of the solution – There has not been any irregularity or exception when executing the solution.
- Timeout error - the solution did not complete in the pre-defined time. If the solution is still running and the time has passed, the system will terminate the application. This is done to prevent infinite loops or programmes that are stuck (deadlocked, starved etc).
- Output overflow – the result of the solution has exceeded a pre-defined threshold. By default this threshold is 1 MB.
- Runtime exception – These types of errors occur during the runtime of the application. Such errors can be caused by many irregularities (missing data, division by zero etc.) In this case, the system will mark the solution as incorrect.

One big problem when executing arbitrary code in the server is the possibility that the code has been written with malicious purposes. In order to prevent damage being done to the server, we have implemented a sandbox environment. This environment acts as a mechanism that will separate the currently executed process with the operating system.

This environment is implemented by using these two methods:

- The code is executed with non-administrative permissions.
- Access is only given to the root folder – the application does not have permissions to access other folders of the system.

Plagiarism detection module

One of the goals of the system is to assist lecturers that teach programming courses with the process of evaluating homework assignments. It allows them quickly and without bias to evaluate assignments. However, since the system is automatic, it is expected that students will try to find work-arounds for the purpose of cheating the system.

One of the main problems is checking assignments that have been plagiarized. For small groups of students, a lecturer can manually check for plagiarism, although, it is almost impossible to check plagiarism in large sets of assignments. Also students will try to cheat the system by making small alterations on their submitted solutions.

For this purpose, we have implemented a plagiarism detection module. This module is supported by the "similarity tester" tool (SIM) developed by Dick Grune¹, a lecturer in VU University in Amsterdam.

This module manages all activities that deal with checking for plagiarism in already evaluated solutions. The activities undertaken by this module are to find correct solutions by other users for the same problem and to check for plagiarism in previously submitted solutions. If plagiarism suspicion is found, the system will register the information and report it to the lecturer. Plagiarism is defined as a similarity between two solutions, represented as a percentage. We have a predefined threshold that aims to separate plagiarized from original submissions. Figure 3 gives a visual representation of this module.

¹<http://www.dickgrune.com/VU.html>Biography [09.04.2014]

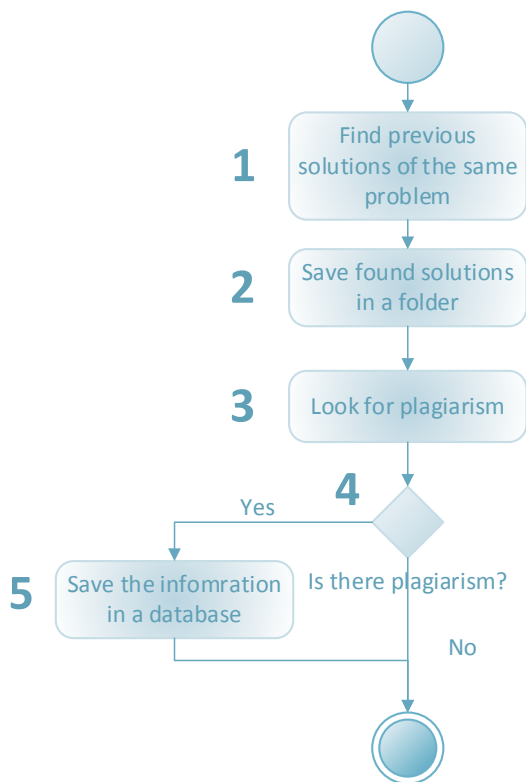


Figure3- Activity diagram of the plagiarism detection module

Conclusions and future discussions

This paper started with a discussion of the need to have a system that will automatically evaluate programming assignments. This is especially true when it is compared to manual assignment checking, and since that process requires time, is not always consistent, it suffers from bias etc. To solve this problem we were inspired by systems that used to organize programming competitions such as ACM-ICPC.

Advantages of our system

In the early processes of analyzing existing systems we set ourselves tasks to improve them especially in the following areas:

- The system should be fully automatic – e.g., the PC2 system used by ACM-ICPC uses a combined approach of manual and automatic evaluation.
- Plagiarism detection system – This module will automatically check and report suspicious cases of plagiarism.
- Numbers of languages – Most automatic judging systems are limited to supporting three or four programming languages. Our system at the moment supports eight languages: C, C++, Java, Pascal, C#, PHP, Python and Perl. However, the system is designed to be only

unlimited in supporting these languages. One can easily add new language support if needed.

- Parallel execution of judging modules – Considering that at a given time the system might be overwhelmed with a large number of solutions, we have implemented our system to evaluate multiple solutions at the same time.
- Web interface – Compared to many existing systems which are implemented as desktop applications, our system is designed as a web application. This allows users to use the system from any platform or device.

Further improvements

The system that we have implemented has many advantages compared to existing solutions. However, there are many areas in which the system might be improved:

- Chat windows – to allow users to communicate and discuss ideas with each other.
- Allow private competitions – a lecturer can set private competitions for his students or groups of students. This will allow students to compete with each other and improve their coding skills.
- Discussion forum – implemented as a forum or a wiki where users will discuss solutions of previous problems. In this way, we will be able to generate a library of solved problems with explanations. All this could be done with a collective effort of users of our system.

Besides the abovementioned ideas and suggestions, we can improve the system to attract more users. This growth can be accomplished by allowing the system to communicate with other learning tools (e.g. learning management systems). In this way, our solution will be used as a service and improve the functionality of such third party solutions.

References

1. Braught, G., Eby, L. M., & Wahls, T. (2008). The effects of pair-programming on individual programming skill. *ACM SIGSE Bulletin*, 40(1), 200–204.
2. ACM, <http://www.acm.org/> [23.11.2013].
3. ICPC, <http://icpc.baylor.edu/icpc> [23.11.2013].
4. Ahmed ShamsulArefin: *Art of Programming Contest (Special Edition for UVa)*, second edition. GyankoshProkashoni, Bangladesh, 2006.
5. Programming Contest Control System (PC2), California State University, Sacramento, U.S.A. <http://www.ecs.csus.edu/pc2/> [24.12.2013].
6. USA Computing Olympiad (2013) <http://www.usaco.org/> [15.09.2013].
7. Programming Contest Control System (2013) <http://www.ecs.csus.edu/pc2/> [15.09.2013].
8. Mares M.: Moe - Design of a Modular Grading System. *Olympiads in Informatics 2009 Vol. 3*. pp. 60-66 (2009).
9. A web site for programming competitions, <http://www.pr-tech.net> [24.12.2013].
10. Web site of the developed system, <http://www.koduesi.com> [10.05.2014].
11. Mares M.: Perspectives on Grading Systems. *Olympiads in Informatics 2007 Vol. 1*. pp. 124-130 (2007).
12. Manev K., Sredkov M., Bogdanov T.: Grading Systems for competitions in programming. Thirty-eight spring conference of the Union of Bulgarian Mathematicians (2009).
13. Liu X.: A new automated grading approach for computer programming. *Computer Applications in Engineering Education*, Volume 21, Issue 3, September 2013, Pages 484-490.
14. Codd, E. F. (1970). "A relational model of data for large shared data banks". *Communications of the ACM* 13 (6): 377 – 387.
15. Merry B.: Using a Linux Security Module for Contest Security. *Olympiads in Informatics B., "10 Years Model-Driven -- What Did We Achieve?," Engineering of Computer Based Systems (ECBS-EERC), 2011 2nd Eastern European Regional Conference on the* , vol., no., pp.1,1, 5-6 Sept. 2011.
16. Mamone, Mark. *Practical Mono (Expert's Voice in Open Source)*. December 12, 2005. ISBN-10: 1590595483. ISBN-13: 978-1590595480. Edition: 1.
17. Plagiarism detection module, http://www.dickgrune.com/Programs/similarity_tester/. [10.04.2014].
18. Freeman, Adam. *Pro ASP.NET MVC 4*. Apress; (January 16, 2013). ISBN-10: 1430242361. ISBN-13: 978-1430242369. Edition: 4.
19. Lerman, Julia. Miller, Rowan. *Programming Entity Framework: Code First*. December 1, 2011. ISBN-10: 1449312942. ISBN-13: 978-1449312947. Edition: 1.

20. M. Luck and M. Joy, "A secure on-line submission system," *Software Practice and Experience*, vol. 29, no. 8, pp. 721–740, 1999.
21. "2012 Trends Report: Application Security Risks". Cenzic, Inc. 11 March 2012. Retrieved 9 July 2012.

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Gentiana Shahini

g.shahini@outlook.com

Fadil Latifi

fadilatifi@hotmail.com

Vjollca Ahmedi

vjollcahmedi@hotmail.com

Abstract

This study analyses the complex subject of student assessment in higher education, specifically in universities in Kosovo. Evaluation covers every kind of activity is used to judge the work and achievement of the students. We suspect that in the evaluation of students, different activities are not used and that it is mainly tests which are applied as student' assessment at the end of each semester.

In addition non-application of continuous evaluation creates some problems that severely impair the character of evaluation and its function. The aim of the research is to highlight the method of student evaluation in higher education, the teachers' attitudes to evaluation and its application in practice. For genuine research of this problem, several methods were used: descriptive methods, statistical and comparative.

As a tool for measuring the opinions of teachers and students, a questionnaire was developed using a Likert scale made from 10 questions with a space for adding comments. The research was conducted using samples, which included 114 participants, respectively 16 teachers and 98 students of the "Hasan Prishtina" University, Faculty of Education, and University in Prishtina, "Kadri Zeka" and the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Law and Economics in Gjilan. Results from the research show that not all teachers apply different evaluation activities, which might help in the final evaluation of students.

Key words: *assessment, tests, oral questioning, students, teachers.*

Introduction

Education is one of the most important areas of every society and every system. We live in a world that changes where only the people who possess knowledge and skills can realize an effective change. Changes in the organization and delivery of teaching enriches learning methodology, uses modern teaching tools, promotes the integration of subjects and encourages the activity of teachers. With changes in society, teachers are faced with various evaluation methods and start to think that the subjective evaluations must come close to the objective knowledge that a student may have. Evaluation is considered as the process of collecting data on the students' learning.

According to the Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2012), the more information you have about the students' learning, the more clear it is how much their competencies are developed and how skilled they are in learning. Furthermore, one may also have a clearer point of view on their progress towards the next important phase of learning.

The activity of evaluation should be valid, intentional and assess what is actually relevant to be evaluated. The main question is whether this kind of assessment is undertaken in our universities in Kosovo. There are a number of difficulties that accompany the process of internal evaluation at all the levels of education including higher education.

Continuous evaluation of students in Higher Education

According to ASHSH-IGJL (2002), the word evaluation means giving the opinion of someone or something; determining the importance, usefulness or social value of someone or something; giving someone what they deserve; appreciation. Kuteli (2013) found that evaluation can be defined as the process of gathering, recording, interpreting, and communicating information, using students' progress and achievements in the development of concepts, knowledge, skills and attitudes. Students' evaluation is an important element and a complex issue in higher education.

The evaluation results have significant effect on a student's career. Therefore, it is important that the evaluation is always done in a professional manner and takes into consideration the existing knowledge for testing and examination processes.

Furthermore, according to AESCAL (2005), students should be informed about the evaluation strategy being used for their programme, what examination or other evaluation methods will be used, what you can expect from them, and what criteria will be applied for their evaluation performance.

According to Nela (2012), quantitative assessment through grading constitutes one of the indicators of the progress of students or a student within the educational system. The indicator itself is a cold and neutral mechanism, representing different shades by degrees. What determines the universal and specific value of grading is the education system, the quality of the institution as well as the professional ethics of teachers and examiners.

Throughout their study, students should be under "observation" assessment. So, apart from regular participation and engagement in lectures and exercises, a full time student should constantly be the subject of building self assessment through colloquia, assignments, practical tasks, research work, seminars, essays and overall academic conduct. The final exam assessment should include theoretical and practical elements, gathered points earned by the above components which are also accumulated, which are compared with the numerical scale to determine a student's achievements and to express them numerically in the evaluation protocol.

Interpretation of the results of research

The research aims to establish the hypothesis regarding the evaluation of students in higher education, teachers' attitudes towards assessment and its application in practice. To analyze this problem, we have used the descriptive method, statistical method and the comparative method. The research was conducted with a sample which included 114 participants, respectively 16 teachers and 98 students of the "Hasan Prishtina" University, Faculty of Education, and University in Prishtina, "Kadri Zeka", Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Law and Economics in Gjilan. As an instrument for measuring the teachers and students' opinions, a questionnaire was compiled using a Likert scale, made from 10 questions with a space for writing comments. The processed data are presented in tables.1 and 2.

I do not know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Any time	Assessment to students
0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	16 100%	At the beginning of the semester to inform students how to assess.
0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 37,50%	10 62,50%	During the semester I try to apply different valuation methods.
0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 31,25%	11 68,75%	Application of continuous assessment motivates students to learn.
3 18,75%	1 6,25%	4 25%	6 37,50%	2 12,50%	The influence of subjective factors on some difficult implementation of continuous assessment.
1 6,25%	0 0%	2 12,50%	9 56,25%	4 25%	In writing the tests, uses a matrix of tests.
2 12,50%	0 0%	0 0%	3 18,75%	11 68,75%	On each term exams, compile various tests.
2 12,5%	1 6,25%	2 12,50%	7 43,75%	4 25,00%	Besides student assessment tests, practice and oral questioning.
1 6,25%	0 0%	2 12,50%	0 0%	13 81,25%	Following the publication of the results of testing, practice consultations with students.
1 6,25%	0 0%	0 0%	2 12,50%	13 81,25%	Final Evaluation I do gathering test scores and other activities.

Table no. 1: Questionnaire for teachers

In the first question about informing students about the way of evaluation at the beginning of the semester, 16 or 100% of teachers responded that they always inform students. In the second question,

concerning the application of different valuation methods, 10 or 62.50% report doing this always, whilst 6 or 37.50% sometimes apply different valuation methods. In the third question about how the application of continuous assessment motivates students to learn, 11 or 68.75% agree and 5 or 31.25% think that sometimes ongoing assessment affects student motivations. In the question about the impact of several subjective factors complicating the implementation of continuous evaluation, 2 or 12.50% of the teachers replied 'always', 6 or 37.50% 'occasionally', 25%, 4 or 25% 'rarely', 1 or 6.25% 'never' and 3 or 18.75% 'don't know'.

In the comments space, the teachers have given the following answers:

There are times that I am determined to fight subjectivity in the evaluation. Without compromise;

- The large number of students, lack of space;
- The non-ordinary attendance of the students in exercises;
- In cases when the professor intervenes with his assistant.

In the fifth question regarding the evaluation of students' work and what methods teachers used, the teachers were free to choose more than one answer. From a total of 16 teachers surveyed, 15 or 93.75% of them stated that they use testing, 14 or 87.5% consider the students' commitment, 4 or 25% use portfolio work as a tool for evaluating students, 11 or 68.75% of the teachers chose the next two options: students' participation in lectures and evaluation through essays, 9 or 56.25% ask students verbally, while 7 or 31.25% of the teachers also use other tools for evaluating students. Regarding the use of a matrix in writing tests, 4 or 25% of the teachers always use a matrix, 9 or 56.25% occasionally do so, 2 or 12.50% rarely use a matrix and 1 or 6.25% don't know.

In the seventh question regarding compiling various tests in each term of the exams, 11 or 68.75% of the teachers have chosen 'always' as an option, 3 or 18.75% have chosen 'occasionally', 2 and 12.50% of teachers 'don't know'. In the question regarding the use of oral questioning., 4 or 25% of the teachers always practice oral evaluation, 7 or 43.75% do so occasionally, 2 or 12.50% rarely do so, 1 or 6.25% have chosen 'never' and finally 2 or 12.50% 'don't know'.

In the ninth question as to whether, after the publication of the results of the exams, the teacher offers consultations with students., 13 or 81.25% of the teachers always offer consultations with students, 2 or 12.50% rarely do so and 1 or 6.25% 'don't know'. For the final question, as to whether a teacher conducts the final evaluation by collating the test scores and other activities, 13 or 81.25% of the teachers have chosen 'always' as an answer, 2 or 12.50% 'occasionally' and 1 or 6.25% 'didn't know'.

Teachers' comments were:

- Usually where the number of students is smaller, the possibilities of continuous evaluations are higher.

- I consider that the oral evaluation and the students' activity during the lecture, better confirms the level of skills e.g. the number of points earned for an exam.
- The evaluation should be systematic because there are students who cannot express their achievements throughout the exam, so the application of more evaluation methods gives real results.
- The evaluation only through exams is not valid. It should be ongoing and multiform.

I do not know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Anytime	Assessment to students
0 0%	3 3,06%	12 12,24%	30 30,61%	53 54,08%	At the beginning of the semester professors tell us on the valuation.
0 0%	14 14,29%	33 33,67%	41 41,83%	10 10,20%	During the semester professors continually evaluate our commitment.
3 3,06%	7 7,14%	28 28,57%	46 46,94%	14 14,28%	Professors are objective assessors.
0 0%	6 6,12%	30 30,61%	36 36,73%	26 26,53%	Professors engage us with tasks for which we are given the relevant instructions.
2 2,04%	4 4,08%	16 16,32%	44 44,89%	32 32,66%	Professors offer different types of tests (eg addition, the alternative, the pairing, etc.).
12 12,24%	8 8,16%	30 30,61%	38 38,78%	10 10,20%	Professors repeat the same tests in different periods of exams.
1 1,02%	2 2,04%	29 29,59%	50 51,02%	16 16,32%	Besides evaluating the tests, teachers also practice oral questioning.
1 1,02%	2 2,04%	13 13,26%	27 27,55%	55 56,12%	Make a final assessment being based on test scores.
0 0%	5 5,10%	38 38,78%	45 45,91%	10 10,20%	Professors share time for consultation with students.

Table no. 2: Questionnaire for Studnets

In the following we will present data from the research undertaken with students.

In the first question as to whether the professors inform us of evaluations at the beginning of the semester, 53 or 54.08% of the students answered 'always', 30 or 30.61% 'occasionally', 12 or 12.24% 'rarely' and 3 or 3.06% 'never'. Regarding the questions as to whether, during the semester, professors continually evaluate our commitment, 10 or 10.20% of students claim that the professors always recognize our commitment, 41 or 41.83% 'occasionally', 33 or 33.67% 'rarely' and 14% or 14.29% 'never'.

In the third question about professors' objectivity in evaluation, 14 or 14.28% of students think that professors are always objective in their evaluation, 46 or 46.94% 'occasionally', 28% or 28.57% answered 'rarely', 14.7% or 7 answered 'never' and 3 or 3.06% did not know. For the fourth question about professors engaging students with tasks with appropriate guidelines, 26 or 26.53% of the students have chosen 'always', 36 or 36.73% 'occasionally', 30 or 30.61% 'rarely' and 6 or 6.12% 'never'.

In response to the fifth question about the use of evaluation methods by professors, students were free to choose more than one answer. Of the 98 students surveyed, 85 or 86.73% of them stated that they were evaluated through testing, 37 or 37.75% consider their commitment during the lectures, 26 or 26.53%

were engaged in learning projects, 60 or 61.22% were evaluated on attendance at lectures, 48 or 48.97% on essays and seminar work, 63 or 64.28% on practice oral exams, while 8 or 8.16% were evaluated by other tools. When asked whether professors offered different types of exams (eg. addition, the alternative, pairing, etc.), 32 or 32.66% of the students have stated 'always', 44 or 44.89% 'occasionally', 16% or 16.32% 'rarely' and 4 or 4.08% 'do not know'.

In response to the seventh question about whether professors repeat the same tests but in different periods of exams, 10 or 10.20% of students said 'always', 38 or 38.78% 'occasionally', 30 or 30.61% 'rarely', 8 or 8.16% 'never' and 12 or 12.24% 'do not know'. Regarding evaluation by oral questioning, 16 or 16.32% of students declare 'always', 50 or 51.02% 'occasionally', 29 or 29.59% 'rarely', 2 or 2.04% 'never' and 1% or 1.02% 'do not know'.

In answer to the ninth question, regarding whether final evaluation takes into account the test scores, 55 or 56.12% of the students think that professors always take into account the test scores, 27 or 27.55% 'occasionally', 13 or 13.26% 'rarely', 2 or 2.04% 'never' and 1 or 1.02% 'do not know'. As to whether the professors share time for consultation with students, 10 or 10.20% of students says that professors always found time to consult with students, 45 or 45.91% 'occasionally', 38 or 38.78% 'rarely', and 5 or 5.10% 'never.'

Students' comments were:

- -To be honest, not all teachers are like that, but with exceptions. We are lucky to have perfect professors, who have given us so much and know how to assess us. In general, professors are correct, but there are also professors who are not punctual.
- A correct questionnaire and the questions are connected with the topics taught in the faculty. But not all professors are careful. I would suggest they should be more accessible and more correct.
- There should be greater collaboration between professors and students.
- If the professors will not distinguish between students, then all would be well. Professors in general are not correct when they assess students, the student who does not attend classes is equal with the student who has always been active.
- We need some changes, such as evaluation by the professors, then the elective course shouldn't be imposed on us.
- Some examinations aren't correctly done, they don't check if the answers are right, but, if they see the full sheet completed by you they will assess you with the grade 6. Some teachers don't let us look at the test. Therefore, we don't have the opportunity to see the test and also the consultations are not held, although we have the right.

Conclusions and measures to improve the situation

From the results of this study we can conclude that students who continue their studies in the universities face difficulties in being assessed. Based on the results of research conducted we noticed that students are skeptical. This may mean that continuous assessment through various methods and instruments are not always available and teachers are forced to evaluate based on the results obtained from the final exams, the scores of which are converted to a final mark. If we compare the results of the two parties involved in the research, teachers and students, we see a discrepancy of opinions and attitudes between staff and students, with students being far more critical of assessment practice.

All the teachers declared that they always inform students at the beginning of the semester on the evaluation of the subject that they teach. However, the students give different opinions, 54.08% declare 'always', 30.61% 'occasionally', 12.24% 'rarely' and 3.06% 'never'. While most of the teachers (62.50% 'always' and 37.50% 'sometimes') declared that they apply different methods for evaluating students. Students report differently. 100% of the instructors believe that 'always' or 'sometimes' continuous assessment motivates students but only 52.03% of students stated that their commitment was 'always' or 'sometimes' continuously evaluated. There is a range of opinion from both staff and students as to the use of oral questioning. 81.25% of teachers state that they 'always' practice consultations with students whereas only 10.20% of students gave the corresponding 'always' answer.

So, based on the results above, to improve the current situation it is necessary to take measures. We believe that the Universities of Prishtina and Gjilan should take the evaluation of students more seriously and make efforts to sensitize all stakeholders in higher education. They should organize ongoing training and workshops to evaluate and monitor teachers for their application. Teachers should constantly update themselves in changes in practice in education, making efforts in acquiring and applying different methods. They should investigate and read the latest literature on the various issues related to teaching and learning, in order to create and maintain a fairer approach to evaluation. The teachers should spend more time evaluating the work they have done and reflecting on it. The purpose of evaluation should contribute to the progress of students, by encouraging them to make reasonable efforts to improve their learning. The teachers should not be affected by subjective factors, and the attitude toward the evaluation should be based on the motivation of students to learn and not to "fight" for a better grade. We hope that the data in this research and the measures taken to improve the situation would benefit the teachers, students, universities and the Ministry by developing more valid and transparent assessment practice.

References

1. AESCAL. (2005). Standardet dhe Udhëzimet për Sigurimin e Cilësisë në Hapësirën Evropiane të Arsimit të Lartë. Retrieved from: http://www.masht-gov.net/advCms/documents/12.Standardet_dhe_Udhezimet_per_Sigurimin_e_Cilesise.pdf
2. ASHSH-IGJL. (2002). *Fjalor i shqipes së sotme*, Tiranë: Toena.
3. Kuteli, M. (2013). Metodatat e vlerësimit të nxënësve. *Mësuesi i Kosovës*, 3(19).
4. MASHT. (2012). Udhëzues për përmirësimin e praktikave në klasë, Prishtinë: Libri shkollor.
5. Nela, D. (20 Maj 2005). Vlerësimi me nota, dështim i një sistemi. *Shqip*. Retrieved from: <http://gazeta-shqip.com/lajme/2012/05/20/nota-nje-sistem-i-deshtuar-vleresimi/>

SELF ASSESSMENT OF DENTAL STUDENTS AS A LEARNING MODALITY IN PRE-CLINICAL DENTAL EDUCATION

Kovacevska Ivona

Ivona.kovacevska@ugd.edu.mk

Coauthors:

Petrovski Mihajlo

Petrovski.mihajlo@ugd.edu.mk

Dimova Cena

Cena.dimova@ugd.edu.mk

Georgiev Zlatko

Sabanov Erol

University “St. Kiril and Metodij” Skopje

Abstract

The goal of dental education is to prepare future clinicians for a general dental practice. The curriculum delivery utilizes learning methodology that includes lectures, pre-clinical laboratories, problem-based learning and clinical internships. The aim of our study was to show whether dental students are able to critically evaluate their work and whether their abilities to self-assess improved over the study. The study examined whether there is a positive correlation between student self-evaluation scores and instructor scores in the second year of Preclinical Cariology and Oral health, courses at the Dental Medicine, Faculty of Medical Sciences, at the University “GoceDelcev”, Štip. The results concerning self-evaluation among second year dental students in pre-clinical procedures who rated themselves regularly throughout the course year exhibited some expected outcomes. The Criteria-based Self-Evaluation sheets provided the students with an orderly and systematic approach to evaluating their preclinical work.

Key words: *dental education, assessment, self-evaluation*

INTRODUCTION

The dental school curriculum places significant emphasis on the acquisition of technical skills resulting in, at the end of dental training, a competent dentist. The goal of dental education is to prepare future clinicians for a general dental practice. The curriculum delivery utilizes learning methodology that includes lectures, working in pre-clinical laboratories, problem-based learning, clinical internships and externships.

“Students become familiar with a didactic approach based on the lectures and the “signing off” of student work.”(Manogue, 1999) To shift from the didactic approach to more of a problem-centred approach involving independent learning, self-assessment and reflection is difficult for students to do.

“Development of these skills is also critical for graduates to be able to manage the changing dental practice environment by being effective life-long learners.” (Winning, 2007) “In particular, they need to be accurate and effective self-assessors and be able to address their learning needs.” (Reap, 2007) “Main goal of professional higher education is to help students develop into practitioners able to reflect critically upon their own professional practice. Students in modern organizations must be able to analyze information’s, to improve this problem-solving skills and communication and to reflect on their own role in the learning process.” (Reap, 2007) Students do not always have the opportunity to reflect on their learning, make connections to basic science information, recall the knowledge that they already have, and employ problem-solving strategies for patients under their care. (Johnson, 2007)

“Undergraduate dental education aims to produce safe, competent and ethical practitioners equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and behavior’s (attitudes). All of these attributes have to be appropriate to engage in the independent practice of dentistry. All assessment procedures should be adequate in time, meaningful, transparent and appropriate. They should be based upon the learning outcomes of the individual program / course, so that academic and clinical student activity is directed towards those desirable outcomes. All dental schools should be encouraged to clearly present the purposes and processes associated with their assessments so that students and staff are fully informed.” (A.D.E.E., 2010)

“Self-assessment as an educational modality has been used in various health professional programmes as a means to ensure competence.” (Asadoorian and Batty, 2005) “Throughout one’s professional career, health professionals must continually assess to their base knowledge, skills and performance and most importantly, act upon these assessments.”(Gordon, 1992)

“Effective learning that involves two key elements: to understand the given standards and criteria and the ability to accurately judge whether one’s work meets the former. If both of these key elements are fulfilled, only then can evidence support that self-assessment methodology accelerates the learning of novices.” (Boshuizer, 1990)

“Self-assessment is based on two very important underlying principles: self-reflections firstly lead to deeper understanding and collaborative assessment with instructors leads to more accurate self-assessment.” (Geissler,1973)

“Self-assessment has been shown to increase student motivation to learn and shifting of the mindset from “how have I performed to how I can get better”. (Epstein and Northrup, 1994) “Students must be trained to critically evaluate their work through self-evaluation. There are noticeable positive correlations between pre-clinical performance and self-evaluation. (Koenigsberg, 1979)

“From an instructor’s point of view, discrepancies can serve as an educational diagnosis to problems within the student’s abilities to self-assess and of course they can be used in improving the education. (Kunovich, 1988)

The aim of our pilot study was to show whether dental students are able to critically evaluate their work and whether their abilities to self-assess improved over the study.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study examined whether there is a positive correlation between student self evaluation scores and instructor scores in the second year of two different courses – Pre-clinical Cariology and Oral Health, courses at the Dental Medicine, Faculty of Medical Sciences, at the University “GoceDelčev”, Štip. Total number of thirty six (36) students of Dental Medicine from the fourth semester in the academic year 2013/2014 participated in this study.

Criteria based evaluation forms were created for each of the operative dentistry procedures; preparation, restoration, and finishing with Amalgam procedures. The skills that are assessed for the subject Prophylaxis of oral diseases were learning about the diagnostic methods and therapeutic prophylactic recommendations for the patients. After each exercise or seminar, each student was given a questionnaire that assessed their realization: preparations, restoration, finalizing, diagnostics and prophylaxis. All the above parameters were further analyzed and evaluate d by an independent evaluator from the Faculty of Medical Sciences, University Goce Delcev-Štip, mainly by assistants from the group of doctoral students. At the end of each practical examination, students were given ten minutes to complete the Criteria-based self-evaluation form and assign themselves a mark. One faculty member blindly evaluated and assigned a mark for the practical exercises using the same evaluation form without the knowledge of the students’ self-evaluation.

The assessment of competencies was realized with attribute evaluating. Marks were awarded on a 1-4 scale based on mark guidelines within the marking rubric (Table 1).

Grade	SKILL LEVEL
4	Excellent or superior result
3	An acceptable or satisfactory result
2	An unacceptable result; significant modifications are required to achieve an acceptable result
1	An unacceptable result; Errors are not correctable by modification; procedure must be redone.

RESULTS

From a total number of 36 students in the practical exercises for the subject Pre-clinical cariology, 24 of them or 61% have self-rated with grade 4, 30% (or 11 students) with acceptable and one student or just 3% of subjects with grade 2. (Tab. 2)

Table 2- Self-evaluation of students on the subject pre-clinical cariology

Students n=36 competitions	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
Preparation Restoration Polishing	24 (67 %)	11 (30 %)	1 (3 %)	/

On the subject Prophylaxis of oral diseases, from 36 students with practical teaching 30 of them (83%) have self-rated with a grade 4 or great knowledge and 17% or 6 students with acceptable. Grades 1 or 2 are not recognized. (tab. 3)

Table 3 - self- assessments of students for the subject Prophylaxis of oral diseases

Students n=36 competitions	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
Diagnostic methods Prophylaxis	30 (83%)	6 (17%)	/	/

The assessment and analysis from the external evaluator for the subject Pre-clinical cariology showed that 22 students or 61% were rated with score 4, 31% or 11 students were rated with acceptable and 3 students or 5.5% with grade 2 (tab. 4).

Table 4 - External evaluation of students for the subject Pre-clinical cariology

Students n=36 competitions	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
Preparation Restoration Polishing	22 (61%)	11 (31 %)	3 (8 %)	/

External evaluation of practical teaching subject Prophylaxis of Oral Diseases showed that from a total number of 36 students, 28 of them or 78% were rated with grade 4, 19% of them or 7 students with acceptable and one or 3% of them with grade 2 (Tab. 5)

Table 5 - External evaluation of students subject Prophylaxis of oral diseases

Students n=36 Competitions	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
Diagnostic methods Prophylaxis	28 (78%)	7 (19%)	1 (3%)	/

Table 6 - Comparison of self-evaluation and external evaluating for the subject Pre-clinical cariology

Students n=36 Pre-clinical cariology	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
Self-evaluation	24 (67 %)	11 (31%)	1 (2%)	/
External evaluating	22 (61%)	11 (31 %)	3 (8 %)	/

Table 7 - Comparison of self-evaluation and external evaluating for the subject Prophylaxis of oral diseases

Students n=36 Prophylaxis of oral diseases	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
Self-evaluation	30 (83%)	6 (17%)	/	/
External evaluating	28 (78%)	7 (19%)	1 (3%)	/

The mean evaluation scores for both student self-evaluation and instructor were calculated and are shown in tab. 8.

Table 8- Mean evaluation scores for both student self-evaluation and instructor

QUESTIONNAIRE	Preclinical Cariology		Prophylaxis of oral diseases	
Excellent or superior result	83.92%	X=3.19	89.47%	X=3.47
Acceptable or satisfactory result	82.65%	X=3.13	91.35%	X=3.56

A Chi-square test showed no statistically significant difference in self-evaluation and external evaluation, for $p > 0.05$.

The results concerning self-evaluation among second year dental students in pre-clinical procedures who rated themselves regularly throughout the course year exhibited some expected outcomes.

DISCUSSION

“The overall responses of the dental students towards the value of self-assessment skill in their dental training were favorable even though the students had not gone through any formal training on how to carry out self-assessment.” (Abdullah, 2011) “When evaluating the data to determine the relationship of examination scores to self-assessment results, we observed interesting trends that require looking

beyond mean values of each group to carefully consider associations among individual student performance variables.” (Curtis, 2008)

“When reviewing a clinical procedure completed by a student, faculty will identify areas that might be improved. We believe that students who are able to see what the faculty members see and thus recognize both their correct and incorrect actions in completing a clinical procedure may be the students with higher self-assessment scores.” (Eraut, 2000)

“On one hand, we live in a society where mistakes are often perceived as a sign of weakness. Students naturally make mistakes in the process of learning. On the other hand, reflective learning exercises, such as self-assessment, require students to develop skills in recognizing, understanding, and learning from their mistakes.” (Brophy, 2002) “Creating an environment in which students are encouraged to understand that their mistakes are an integral part of the educational process is a challenge, but it could lead to improved self-assessment skills, which the current study suggests could result in improved learning.” (O’Donovan, 2004)

In our study, it was found that students in their self-evaluation indicated that their tasks were performed excellently or acceptably. It refers to both examined subjects-Pre-clinical Cariology and Prophylaxis of oral diseases. 67 % of students from Pre-clinical Cariology and 83% of the students from Prophylaxis of Oral Diseases self-rated their work as excellent. There were no students who assessed their work as unsatisfactory.

The external evaluation found that the majority of students in both subjects, 61 % of those from Pre-clinical Cariology and 78 % from Prophylaxis of Oral Diseases, were rated as excellent. There were no students from the two subjects who assessed the success of their work as unsatisfactory.

Therefore, it is easily noticeable that there was little difference between the self-evaluation and external evaluation made for these two subjects. In the beginning, in the first exercises, the self-evaluation and external evaluation were lower than the results from the same exercise after few months of studying. As time passed, the motivation and skills and competences of students increased, so the evaluation showed grade 4.

“Successful instruction of novice dental learners requires understanding motor skills theory, motor performance, and implicit learning, as well as the schema of stages of learning. For novice students, explicit directions given in small steps and provision of timely and appropriate feedback on performance are techniques that facilitate learning of motor skills. Repetition and continued practice improve performance.” (McDonald and Boud, 2003) “Designing and applying appropriate evaluation instruments may contribute to effective teaching, calibration of faculty, and student learning. Rubrics and rating scales designed with specific criteria related to each step in a preclinical skill performance can be valuable tools for both the learner and the evaluator. Novice students benefit from criteria that are explicit and

meaningful. Further study is needed to assess the impact of nontraditional grading systems for preclinical and clinical courses.”

(Whipp, 2000)

“Dental and dental hygiene programs across the country utilize self-assessment as one of the several components in evaluating pre-clinical and clinical skill development.”

(Biggs, 1982)

“Instructor feedback and reinforcement are critical in helping students advance to the next stage of the learning continuum.”

(Anderson, 2001)

CONCLUSIONS

Self-evaluation is an effective pedagogical activity, and as a methodology should be introduced in dentistry and other medical disciplines. In relation to the consideration of when to start this procedure, we recommend that it be in the 4th semester. This is acceptable especially because pre-clinical subjects in which there is self-evaluation can increase the skills and competencies of students. It can make them even more motivated for further study years and with greater effect in the teaching of different clinical content and subjects.

As a conclusion and recommendation, a system of self-evaluation should be introduced in dentistry in the second year because it enhances teaching, motivation and the competencies of the students so that they develop into ready, willing and successful clinicians.

REFERENCES

1. Manogue, M., Brown, G.A., Nattres, B.R. & Fox, K. (1999). Improving student learning in root canal treatment using self-assessment. *Int Endo J*, 32, 397-405.
2. Winning, T., Lekkas, D. & Townsend, G. (2007). Developing Clinical Self-Assessment Skills in First-year Dental Students. From the REAP International Online Conference on Assessment Design for Learner Responsibility, 29th-31st May, 2007. Available at <http://ewds.strath.ac.uk/REAP07>
3. From the REAP International Online Conference on Assessment Design for Learner Responsibility, 29th-31st May, 2007. Available at <http://ewds.strath.ac.uk/REAP07>
4. From the REAP International Online Conference on Assessment Design for Learner Responsibility, 29th-31st May, 2007. Available at <http://ewds.strath.ac.uk/REAP07>
5. Johnson K. Fostering Reflection, Critical Thinking and Self Assessment in Dental Hygiene Students. Sabbatical Project.Fall 2007
6. Association for Dental Education in Europe. Curriculum Structure, Content, Learning and Assessment in European Undergraduate Dental Education; Task Force II, Appendix 2 – Assessment. 2010
7. Asadoorian, J. & Batty, H.P. (2005). An evidence-based model of effective self- assessment for directing professional learning. *J Dent Educ*, 69(12), 1315-1323.
8. Milgrom, P. Chapko, M., Milgrom, L., & Weinstein, P. (1985). Quality assurance and the role of self-evaluation and continuing education. *Dent Clin North Am*, 29(3), 531-43.
9. Gordon, M. (1992). Self-assessment programmes and their implication for health professional training. *Acad Med*, 67(10), 672-679.
10. Boshuizer, H.P.A., Norman, G.R., & Schmidt, H.G. (1990). A cognitive perspective on medical expertise: theory and implications. *Acad Med*, 65, 611-21.
11. Geissler, P.R. (1973). Student self-assessment in dental technology. *J Dent Educ*, 37, 19-21.
12. Epstein, I and Northrup, R. (1994). The students' role in assessment: building a progression in problem-based learning. *Ann Comm Orient Educ*, 7, 389-98.
13. Koenigsberg, S., Houpt, M. Oppenheim, M., Sheykhoslam, Z. (1979). Self-evaluation Compared with preclinical technique performance. *J Dent Res*, 58, 273.
14. Kunovich, R.S., Pagniano, R.P., Chandler, H.H., & Rashid, R.G. (1988). Learning selfassessment in preclinical restorative dentistry. *J Dent Educ*, 52(5), 259-62.
15. Abdullaha D., Shalini K, Wan Noorina W, Jasmina QZ, Safura B., Mohamad N, Dental Students' Perceptions on the Value of Self-Assessment Skill . *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 18 (2011) 122–127

17. Curtis DA, Lind SL, Mark Dellinges M, Setia G, Finzen FC, Dental Students' Self-Assessment of Preclinical Examinations. *Journal of Dental Education* ;March 2008 pp 265-277
18. Eraut, M. (2000) Non-formal learning and tacit knowledge in professional work. *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 70, 113-136.
19. Brophy, J. (2002) Introduction. In J. Brophy (Ed.), *Social Constructivist Teaching: Affordances and Constraints* (pp ix-xxii). JAI, Amsterdam. 9(3), 325-335.
20. O'Donovan, B., Price, M. & Rust, C. (2004) Know what I mean? Enhancing student understanding of assessment standards and criteria. *Teaching in Higher Education* .9(3), 325-335.
21. McDonald, B. & Boud, D. (2003) The impact of self-assessment on achievement: the effects of self-assessment training on performance in external examinations. *Assessment in Education* 10(2), 209-220.
22. Whipp JL, Ferguson DJ, Wells LM, Iacopino AM, Rethinking Knowledge and Pedagogy in Dental Education. *J of Dent Educ* 2000;64:860-866
23. Biggs J, Collis K. *Evaluating the Quality of Learning: the SOLO taxonomy* (1982) New York: Academic Press.
24. Anderson LW, Kratwohl DR. *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. New York: Longman, 2001.

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS AS A WAY OF ASSESSMENT: STUDENTS' AND LECTURERS' PERSPECTIVES

Jehona Mustafa-Murtezani

j.mustafa@seeu.edu.mk

Iranda Bajrami

i.bajrami@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract

The present study examined different aspects of presentations as a part of graded assessment applied at SEEU. The objective of this investigation was to discover the students' and lecturers' opinion on different aspects of class presentations. The data were gathered through teacher and student surveys including questions related to individual and group presentations, the frequency of presentations made, purpose and the use of technology. Furthermore, participants were surveyed on their perception of instruction, feedback and assessment provided, and most importantly on students' readiness for presenting in real life settings. The results of this study showed that both students and lecturers agree that presentations, as a common assessment method at SEEU and elsewhere, have improved student communication abilities. Furthermore, if presentations are appropriately implemented and instructed, they could give a huge advantage to students' in their future careers. Perceiving presentations as a very important requirement for students' present and future communication needs, this study provided useful data for improving the presentation process across SEEU curricula.

Keywords: *student presentations, assessment, communication skills*

Introduction

Students need excellent communication skills during studies as well as when facing real life settings. Educational institutions bear a great responsibility for enhancing students' presentation skills because "today's challenging economic situation means that it is no longer sufficient for a new graduate to have knowledge of an academic subject; increasingly it is necessary for students to gain those skills which will enhance their prospects of employment" (Fallows & Steven, 2000). Understanding the importance of presentations in everyday life and work, SEEU considers them as a significant tool of learning and assessment. A considerable number of SEEU lecturers implement this means of assessment by encouraging students to present on various topics in class. In order to facilitate students' learning, different approaches like providing guidelines before the presentations, feedback after the presentations, grading rubrics and peer evaluations are applied.

Bearing in mind that students live in a highly competitive job market that requires competent communicators, it is necessary to improve students' communication skills through classroom presentations in order to help them outperform the other applicants when applying for a job and for their career.

Literature Review

Acknowledging the importance of presentation competence, many studies have been conducted to help students acquire presentation skills (Kelley & Bridges, 2002; Hynes & Stretcher, 2008; Gray, 2010). According to Stowe, (n.d.), current employers and institutions require sound communication competences from their employees. As a result, (Alshare & Hindi, 2004) assert that students' classroom presentations have become "an important element in delivering positive learning experiences". Teaching of presentation skills should be incorporated in various courses, because it "is no longer the exclusive purview of communication courses" (Luthy & Deck, 2007). However, transferring the gained skills into practice has proved to be a difficult task (Gray, 2010), and thus greater attention needs to be paid in order to overcome this weakness.

By implementing oral presentations as almost a required part of assessment methodology, the interviewed lecturers not only try to aid their students unconditionally in improving their presentation competencies, but they also put a burden on themselves through the application of students' presentations. Along these lines King (2002) states that,

Working with students on oral presentations is a challenging job for teachers because it not only involves training in other disciplines such as speech communication and public speaking, but also demands more of teachers in terms of time and effort in lesson planning and teaching strategies.

Moreover, lecturers' effort in improving students' communication skills, when implemented appropriately, is rewarded because students gain, not only during their studies but also after their

graduation. In this regard, King adds that “oral presentations, if properly guided and organized, provide a learning experience and teach lifelong skills that will be beneficial to learners in all school subjects as well as later in their careers”.

The advantages of implementing presentations are numerous and they are listed by King (2002) and Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan (2010). According to King, the main advantages of presentations especially for EFL learners are: “bridging the gap between language study and language use; using the four language skills in a naturally integrated way; helping students to collect, inquire, organize and construct information; enhancing team work; and helping students become active and autonomous learners”. Similarly, Al-Issa & Al-Qubtan (2010) list some additional advantages such as: integrating language skills, practice speaking, making decisions, preparing for work life, acquiring knowledge through English, promoting learner centredness, expanding the teacher’s roles and learning how to use technology. Likewise, these advantages are perceived as important by the interviewed lecturers at SEEU and especially by EFL lecturers who are proven from the results to have worked more regularly with this method. Since in our context English is used minimally outside the classroom, they recognize that SEEU students have a greater need to improve their presentation skills, therefore presentation instruction is of importance for their present and future needs.

Methodology

The main objective of this study was to discover students’ and lecturers’ opinions on different aspects of class presentations. In order to gather the necessary data, teacher and student surveys were used. The surveys consisted of questions related to individual and group presentations, the frequency of in-class presentations made, purpose and the use of technology. The participants of this study were SEEU students and lecturers, consisting of 46 students all years and faculties, and 6 lecturers. Students from the faculties at SEEU (Public Administration and Political Science, Business and Economics, Contemporary Sciences and Technologies, Law, Languages, Cultures and Communications) taking English courses in the academic year 2013/14 were surveyed. The lecturers participating in this study were also from various departments and majors. The student survey questions are shown in Appendix A and the teacher survey questions are shown in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

Collected data were tabulated in 8 tables by dividing the survey into several categories including types of presentations, instruction and preparedness. In terms of types of presentations, the survey asked the students and lecturers to state their preference of the type of presentation given, the average number of presentations assigned per semester, the venues of presentations, the objective of presentation and visual aids used. They were also asked to rank a given list of items in order of importance.

Regarding the instructions provided, students and lecturers were asked to report on the instruction received/given before the presentation, and provide information on the helpfulness of the grading rubrics. Finally, concerning the last category related to preparedness, both students and lecturers provided information on student level of preparedness for presentations in real life settings. The tables and detailed descriptions are presented below.

Results

The results of this study are presented both numerically and descriptively. Eight tables are provided which are divided into categories based on different aspects related to presentations.

Table 1B: Number of realized presentations		
	Group	Individual
Students	34	30
Lecturers	10	1

Table 1A: Type of Presentations Preferred		
	Group	Individual
Students	26	20
Lecturers	5	1

Table 1 C: Number of presentations in English /professional courses/other events			
	English courses	Professional courses	In other events
Students	65	84	3

Table 1: Number of presentations per semester

Findings of table 1

Results show that both lecturers and students report that most presentations have been assigned and delivered in a classroom setting. This outcome is expected as a result of the importance given to the presentations as a classroom activity, as well as the dominance of the on-site teaching practice. There are 5 students who have reported that they delivered presentations at an off-site setting like at various public institutions, at the American Corner, conferences, and non-governmental organizations (NGO). As a result of the available online services at SEEU, two students have reported that they have also presented online.

	In a classroom	Off-site	Online	Other
Students	42	5	2	3

Lecturers	5	0	1	0
-----------	---	---	---	---

Table 2: Setting for Presentations

Findings of table 2

Results show that both lecturers and students report that most presentations have been assigned and delivered in a classroom setting. This outcome is expected as a result of the importance given to the presentations as a classroom activity, as well as the dominance of the on-site teaching practice. There are 5 students who have reported that they delivered presentations at an off-site setting like at various public institutions, at the American Corner, conferences, and non-governmental organizations (NGO). As a result of the available online services at SEEU, two students have reported that they have also presented online.

	Transmit ideas	Argue a position	Demonstrate understanding	Report results of research and analyses
Students	33	11	23	15
Lecturers	3	1	4	2

Table 3: Purpose for Presentations

Findings of table 3

Results indicate that students are offered opportunities to present for various aims and objectives. The majority of students present with an aim of transmitting ideas to their colleagues, followed by the aim of demonstrating understanding. However, the results show that arguing a position is considered as the least important purpose for presentation.

	Power Point	Video clips	Smart board	Other
Students	46	20	1	4
Lecturers	6	4	2	0

Table 4: Visual Aids

Findings of table 4

Visual aids are an asset to the presentations. The results indicate that the most frequently used visual aid by students is Powerpoint (46 respondents), which is also the most commonly encouraged tool by all lecturers. The next popular visual aid is video clips (20 respondents), whereas the smart board is used minimally, only by one student. Students also reported using other means like Prezi and printed photos.

	Students	Lecturers
Organization of presentation	1	3
Presenter knowledge of the topic	2	2
Eye contact	3	7
Audience interaction	4	8
Vocal qualities	5	9
Appropriateness of content	6	1
Adherence to time limit	7	6
Visual aids	8	4
Confidence	9	5
Humour	10	10

Table 5: Rank of Importance of Factors for Successful Presentation ('1' indicating the most important; '10' indicating the least important)

Findings of table 5

The findings of table 5 show that a significant discrepancy between students' and lecturers' viewpoints appears in terms of appropriateness of content and other elements. Lecturers ranked it as the first most important, while students ranked it as the sixth most important factor. Next, visual aids are considered as more important by lecturers, who ranked them as fourth, rather than students, who ranked them as eighth. After that, an important finding is that students view confidence as one of the least important factors while lecturers ranked it as fifth. Finally, eye contact is ranked as the fifth most important factor by students, unlike lecturers who have ranked it as seventh.

I am provided with presentation skill instruction throughout my English courses.	Students Agree/23	Lecturers Agree/5
I am provided with presentation skill instruction throughout my professional courses.	Agree/18	N/A
I am provided with PowerPoint instruction throughout my English courses.	Agree/22	A/5
I am provided with PowerPoint instruction throughout my professional courses	Agree/18	N/A
I practice a presentation before a final presentation.	Strongly Agree/24	Neutral/4
My professors view my PowerPoint slides, notes, or a dress rehearsal before I give my presentations	Neutral/15	Disagree/4
It would help me make better presentations if tutors or staff, other than my professor, were available to help me prepare.	Neutral/16	Neutral/4
My English classes have improved my presentation skills.	Agree /33	Agree/4
My professional classes have improved my presentation skills	Agree/21	N/A

Table 6: Presentation Instruction

Findings of table 6

The findings of Table six reveal that students and lecturers differ in their ranking of rehearsal before the presentation with students reporting a higher amount of rehearsal. Generally, students report an improvement in their presentation skills more in their English courses than in their professional courses. Furthermore, both students and lecturers were neutral in their views that a tutor would be helpful for students in preparing presentations. The remaining categories do not indicate any significant discrepancies worth mentioning.

Are rubrics helpful?	extremely	somewhat helpful
Students	24	22
Lecturers	4	2

Table 7 A: Grading Rubrics

Findings of table 7 A

Table seven A results indicate that both lecturers and students agree that grading rubrics are helpful. In addition, results indicate that although in some cases grading rubrics are given before presentations, the majority of students state that in most cases they receive the rubrics after the presentation only.

What type of feedback is helpful?			
	Both professor and peer feedback is helpful	Professor feedback is helpful	Peer feedback is helpful
Students	32	14	0
Lecturers	6	0	0

Table 7 B: Feedback

Findings of table 7 B

The results indicate that feedback can come from teachers or peers. Students report higher satisfaction with feedback received from both teachers and peers, but not at all from peers only. Also, all the lecturers agree that feedback provided by both lecturers and peers is helpful.

Presentation skills are important for job seeking students	Strongly Agree/23	Agree/6
Individual presentations provide better career preparation than group presentations.	Agree/17	Neutral/3
Students are comfortable with casual speaking,	Agree/18	Agree/5
Students are comfortable making formal presentations.	Agree/20	Agree/5
Students are comfortable using technology to make online presentations.	Agree/17	Agree/6
English classes prepare students for giving presentations in the real world	Agree/37	Agree/6
Professional courses prepare students for giving presentations in the real world	Agree/25	N/A

Table 8: Student Preparedness for Presentations in Real Life

Findings of table 8

Concerning table eight results, both lecturers and students agree that presentation skills are important for job seeking. Respondents agree that individual presentations provide better career preparation than group presentations. Regarding students' comfort using technology, results show that less than half of the students report that they feel confident in using technology, which is an indication that students need more IT instruction. Findings show that the majority of students either agree or strongly agree that English classes prepare them to give presentations in real life more than their professional classes.

Discussion of Findings

The study reveals that both students and lecturers acknowledge the importance of student presentation competence for the purposes of their studies and future careers. The data indicate that individual presentation skills are also important for students' future employment. Consequently, it may be suggested that lecturers need to focus more on individual rather than group presentations. In addition, results indicate dominance of in-class presentations, which limits students' preparedness to present in different settings, like online and off-site presentations. Regarding the use of rubrics, it has been found that students benefit from grading rubrics, thus, they should always be provided, and lecturers should strive to incorporate them along with presentations. However, the effect would be maximized if students are provided with rubrics before rather than after the presentation, as was reported by students. Regarding the availability of the presentation tutors, students' and lecturers' perceptions are neutral. This data reveal that both students and lecturers are uncertain about the benefits of additional presentation tutors, therefore our recommendation is that providing additional support from presentation tutors should be encouraged in order to enhance students' presentation skills. Finally, the majority of students surveyed agreed that English classes have improved their presentation skills more than their professional classes, which is an issue to be taken into consideration since professional courses need to focus on providing presentation instruction and assessment with grades/credit as well.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Presentation skills are widely regarded as an asset that will enhance students' chances of achieving greater success during their education and their career development. As a result, the university students of the present time are required to possess sound communication skills. Therefore, it should be expected that lecturers guide and support them in developing presentation competence that will be later applied in future life and employment.

The aim of this study was to discover students' and lecturers' perceptions regarding the evaluation, instruction and delivery of presentations, as a way of assessment. The data revealed that presentations, as a widely implemented assessment method at SEEU, are perceived and acknowledged as a very useful

practice. Although discrepancies between lecturers and students exist, they still agree on many aspects such as the usefulness of rubrics and feedback provided, as well as the benefit for their future career.

As a recommendation, it can be suggested that presentations should be as effective as possible, by providing more presentation instruction and support from all lecturers who use this method. An additional suggestion would be that despite the fact that students make significant progress in developing their presentation skills, from first to third year of their studies, still, lecturers across the university must focus on boosting students' presentation competence by implementing it more frequently in their teaching curriculum, with the best possible practice with regards to tutor advice and use of rubrics and appropriate feedback.

References

1. Al-Issa, A.S. & Al-Qubtan. R. (2010). Taking the Floor: Oral Presentations in EFL Classrooms. *TESOL Journal*, 1 (2), 227-246
2. Alshare, K. & Hindi, N.M. (2004). The Importance of Presentation Skills in the Classroom: Students and Instructors Perspectives. *Journal of Computing Sciences in Colleges*, 19 (4), 6-15.
3. Fallows, S. & Steven, C. (2000). Building Employability Skills into the Higher Education Curriculum: A University-wide Initiative. *Education & Training*, 42 (2), 75-83.
4. Gray, F. E. (2010). Specific Oral Communication Skills Desired in New Accountancy Graduates. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 73 (1), 40-67.
5. Hynes, G. E. & Stretcher, R. (2008). A Missing Link in Business Schools. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 71 (2), 207-211.
6. Kelley, C.A. & Bridges, C. (2005). Introducing Professional and Career Development Skills in the Marketing Curriculum. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 27 (3), 212-218.
7. King, J. (2002). Preparing EFL learners for oral presentations. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 8 (1). Retrieved, September 2014 from <http://iteslj.org/Lessons/King-PublicSpeaking.html>
8. Luthy, M.R. & Deck, A.B. (2007). Improving Presentation Skills Among Business Students. *ASBBS E-Journal*, 3 (1), 67-71.
9. Stowe, K., Parent, J., Schwartz, L., & Sendall, P. (Forthcoming) Are Business School Students Prepared to Present? *Journal of the Academy of Business Education*

APPENDIX A

STUDENT SURVEY ON PRESENTATIONS

The goal of this survey is to learn students' opinions on many aspects of class presentations. Student opinions will be used by professors to improve the presentation process. Please respond thoughtfully and honestly. All surveys are anonymous, and no individual answers will be released.

1. What type of presentations do you prefer?

Group Individual No preference between group and individual presentations

2. In what settings have you made presentations? (Check all that apply)

In a classroom Through the internet to an online audience
 At an off-classroom site (e.g. a lecture hall,) Other - Please specify:-----

3. In this semester, how many total presentations have you made in all of your classes? (*Include any remaining in this semester.*)

Group: _____ (number)

Individual: _____ (number)

4. During your studies, how many presentations have you made? (*Include any remaining in this semester.*)

In English classes: _____ (number)

In your professional courses at your faculty: _____.(number)

In other events: _____ (number) - Please specify:-----

5. What is the purpose of your presentations? (*Check all that apply*)

Transmit ideas to my classmates Report results of a research paper

Argue a position Report results of a case analysis

Demonstrate my understanding of a topic Other - Please list:-----

6. What visual aids do you use for your presentations? (*Check all that apply*)

PowerPoint Smart board

Video clips Other - Please list:-----

7. Please rank the following ten items in order of importance to successful presentations, with

‘1’ indicating the **most important**; ‘10’ indicating the least important. If an item is not important, leave it blank.

Ranking	Item
_____	Organization of presentation
_____	Appropriate content, based upon the assignment
_____	Presenter's knowledge of the topic
_____	Visual aids (e.g. slides, video, etc.)
_____	Adherence to time limits
_____	Eye contact
_____	Vocal qualities
_____	Audience interaction
_____	Confidence
_____	Humor
_____	Other, please list:

8. Do your professors provide grading rubrics for your presentations?

_____ Yes, always _____ Yes, sometimes. _____ No, never.

9. If yes, are they provided before or after the presentation? (check all that apply)

_____ Before _____ After

10. Are the grading rubrics helpful?

_____ Extremely helpful _____ Somewhat helpful _____ Not helpful at all _____ Not applicable

11. What kind of feedback do you receive on your presentations?

- _____ Feedback from professors only
- _____ Feedback from peers only
- _____ Feedback from both professors and peers

Indicate your response to each of the following statements.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
12	The feedback I receive from my professors is helpful.					
13	The feedback I receive from my peers is helpful.					
14	I am provided with presentation skill instruction throughout my English courses.					
15	I am provided with presentation skill instruction throughout my professional courses.					
16	I am provided with Power Point instruction throughout my English courses.					
17	I am provided with Power Point instruction throughout my professional courses					
18	I practice a presentation before a final presentation.					
19	My professors view my Power Point slides, notes, or a dress rehearsal before I give my presentations					
20	My professors view my Power Point slides, notes, or other material after I give may my presentations.					
21	It would help me make better presentations if tutors or staff, other than my professor, were available to help me prepare.					
22	Presentation skills are important for job seeking students.					
23	My English classes have prepared me for giving presentations in a 'real world' setting.					
24	My professional classes have prepared me for giving presentations in a 'real world' setting					
25	Individual presentations provide better career preparation than do group presentations.					
26	My English classes have improved my presentation skills					
27	My professional classes have improved my presentation skills					
28	I am comfortable with casual public speaking, such as talking in class or making an informal speech.					
29	I am comfortable giving formal presentations.					
30	I am comfortable using online systems to make internet presentations.					

31. Please provide comments on any of the above questions:

32. What year are you in? ___ 1st year, ___ 2nd year, ___ 3rd year

33. What do you study?

___ LCC/English ___ BA/Business ___ CST/Computer Science
 ___ Law ___ PA/ Public Administration ___ Other - Please specify:

34. What is your gender? ___ Male, ___ Female

35. What is your age? _____

APPENDIX B

LECTURER SURVEY ON PRESENTATIONS

1. What type of presentations do you prefer your students to give?

Group Individual No preference between group and individual presentations

2. In what settings do your students make presentations? (Check all that apply)

In a classroom Through the internet to an online audience
 At an off-classroom site (e.g. a lecture hall,) Other - Please specify:-----

3. On average, how many presentations does each student make in one of your classes?

Group: _____ (number)

Individual: _____ (number)

4. What is the purpose of your assigned presentations? (Check all that apply)

Transmit ideas to their classmates Report results of a research paper
 Argue a position Report results of a case analysis
 Demonstrate understanding of a topic Other - Please list:-----

5. What visual aids do you require for your student presentations? (Check all that apply)

PowerPoint Smart board
 Video clips Other - Please list:-----

6. Please rank the following ten items in order of importance to successful presentations, with '1' indicating the most important; '10' indicating the least important. If an item is not important, leave it blank.

Ranking	Item
_____	Organization of presentation
_____	Appropriate content, based upon the assignment
_____	Presenter's knowledge of the topic
_____	Visual aids (e.g. slides, video, etc.)
_____	Adherence to time limits
_____	Eye contact
_____	Vocal qualities
_____	Audience interaction
_____	Confidence
_____	Humor
_____	Other, please list:

7. Do you provide grading rubrics to your students for their presentations?

Yes, always Yes, sometimes. No, never.

8. If yes, are they provided before or after the presentation? (check all that apply)

Before After

9. Are the grading rubrics helpful to students?

Extremely helpful Somewhat helpful Not helpful at all Not applicable

10. What kind of feedback is provided on students' presentations?

Feedback from professors only
 Feedback from peers only
 Feedback from both professors and peers

Indicate your response to each of the following statements.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11	The feedback I give students is helpful to them.					
12	The feedback students receive from peers is helpful to them.					
13	I provide students with presentation skill instruction.					
14	I provide students with Power Point instruction.					
15	My students practice presentations before their final presentation.					
16	I view my students' Power Point slides, notes, or a dress rehearsal before they may give presentations.					
17	I require my students to submit Power Point slides, notes, or some other material after they give presentations.					
18	My students seek help from me prior to their presentations.					
19	Students would make better presentations if tutors or college staff, other than professors, were available to help them prepare.					
20	Presentation skills are important for job seeking students.					
21	Individual Presentations provide better career preparation than do group presentations.					
22	I prepared students to give presentations in a 'real world' setting.					
23	My classes improve my students' presentation skills.					
24	My students are comfortable with casual public speaking, such as talking in class or making an informal speech.					
25	My students are comfortable giving formal presentations					
26	My students are comfortable using online systems to make internet presentations.					

27. Please provide comments on any of the above questions:

28. What is your academic title? _____

29. In which faculty/centre do you teach?

_____ LCC/English _____ BA/Business _____ CST/Computer Science
_____ Law _____ PA/ Public Administration _____ LC/Language Centre
_____ Other - Please specify:

30. What is your gender? _____ Male, _____ Female

31. What is your age? _____ 20-29 _____ 30-39 _____ 40-49 _____ 50-59 _____ 60-69 _____ 70+

APPROACHES AND PRACTICES FOR CONDUCTING THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Veronika Kareva

v.kareva@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) as a concept, started to gain more attention and interest in the field of higher education in the Republic of Macedonia with the adoption of the Law on Higher Education in 2008 and its numerous amendments in the years that followed. The intention was to follow the best international practices in pursuing and developing academic careers, but the term itself somehow remained undefined. In the law, the term is used in order to specify the criteria for academic promotion and is referred to as achievements in applying the research results in the teaching/learning process. This broad description has led to different interpretations by the higher education institutions in the country and, as a result of that, diverse interpretation and evaluation of the same concept. The aim of this paper is to define the term based on the review of literature and internationally established standards and experiences. It will then compare them with the situation at South East European University (SEEU) and two state universities in the country in terms of the inclusion of SoTL in the criteria for evaluation and academic progress. Finally, it will make some recommendations that will be useful not only for the University management, but also for the policy makers in the country. Besides the review of related literature, 11 members of the SEEU academic staff with different teaching and scientific titles will be interviewed in order to demonstrate their understanding of conducting and evaluating the SoTL. Students' perceptions about the most important qualities that teachers should possess will also be included in order to see if they match the criteria already selected by the University.

Key words: *scholarship, teaching, learning, approach, promotion*

Introduction

The Law on Higher Education (2008) in the Republic of Macedonia (RM) and its numerous amendments in the years that followed were aimed at incorporating the best international practices that would lead to higher quality in this area and result in producing a more qualified labour force. Its adoption created a big public debate related to University autonomy and control by the Government: “The aggressive attack to the University autonomy that the present government has been doing for a longer period, culminates with the latest amendments of the Law on Higher Education” (Frckovski, 2011). The most widely criticized aspect was regarding the very demanding criteria for academic promotion where the concept of scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) in the educational and academic context in this country was introduced for the first time.

Thus, according to Article 125 from this Law, the criteria for appointment into an assistant professorship include completed PhD studies in the relevant field, published papers and achievements in the application of research results, as well as an ability to perform certain types of educational activities. This was the general legal framework under which the universities created their own rules for promotion. The part about qualifications and publications was very clear. One either has them or doesn't have them. It was the part about the achievements in the application of research results – which in our opinion was translated directly from the English phrase, ‘scholarship of teaching and learning’ – that was a bit vague and therefore led to different interpretations of the concept and different explanations and criteria at various institutions.

Our own uncertainties about the meaning of the concept were another motivation to explore this issue further. What is more, that was also the case with the majority of the colleagues with whom we shared the concern and whose opinions are also presented later as part of the study.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to bring some light to the concept of SoTL by trying to define it based on the review of literature and internationally established standards and experiences, to compare them with the situation in RM, specifically at South East European University (SEEU) and the two biggest state universities, and to make some recommendations for the University management and policy makers in the country. These objectives are expected to contribute to setting clearer evaluation criteria for academic performance and progress.

Defining SoTL

The Longman dictionary (2001) defines scholarship as the knowledge, work or methods involved in serious studying. In the Oxford Wordpower Dictionary (2004), it is also referred to as the serious study of an academic subject. So instead of scholarship of teaching and learning, we could say, serious study of teaching and learning in an academic setting and then it remains to explain what is meant by the word “serious”.

That this notion is not well conceptualized and defined has also been stated by Hutchings (2000) from the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. For that reason he approached a few distinguished scholars from the Academy and asked them to explain their views about this significant issue. In the resulting publication, Hutchings points out that:

“First, the scholarship of teaching and learning is deeply embedded in the discipline; its questions arise from the character of the field and what it means to know it deeply” (p.7)... “Second, the scholarship of teaching and learning is an aspect of practice. In contrast to research done by a ‘third party’ examining the practice of others, this is work, if you will, ‘in the first person,’ undertaken by faculty looking at their own practice (and sometimes the practice of colleagues with whom they teach or share curricular responsibility). Finally, the scholarship of teaching and learning is characterized by a transformational agenda. The scholarship of teaching and learning might then be defined as scholarship undertaken in the name of change, with one measure of its success being its impact on thought and practice.” (p. 9)

A very similar approach in defining SoTL is offered by Shulman (2000) who advocates 3 Ps in defining the concept: professionalism, pragmatism and policy: “Scholarship of teaching and learning supports our individual and professional roles, our practical responsibilities to our students and our institutions, and our social and political obligations to those that support and take responsibility for higher education”. (p.53) Professionalism, according to this author, refers to the responsibilities that result from being a professional scholar or educator, especially those coming from the discipline determined by the PhD. Pragmatism refers to the activities needed to ensure that one’s work as an educator is constantly improving and meeting its objectives and accountabilities to students, while policy refers to the capacity to respond to the legitimate questions of legislatures, different institutions and boards and the very demanding market for higher education.

According to Kreber (2002), in spite of the significant achievements in the scholarship of teaching at the levels of theory and programme development, “there remains considerable ambiguity regarding the meaning of the concept and this ambiguity has implications for faculty evaluation.” (p.5) She further claims that there are three different ways in which teachers in higher education engage with teaching. They are teaching excellence, teaching expertise and the scholarship of teaching. The last one should involve critical reflection as well as scrutiny by peers. The same author conducted research in which, similarly to our study, eleven participants were asked to identify issues surrounding the scholarship of teaching which they considered to be unresolved. These participants contended that clearer definitions were needed to distinguish the meaning of concepts such as teaching expertise, teaching excellence and the scholarship of teaching. It seems that despite the advances in higher education in the area of SoTL, a unified definition of the concept remains elusive.

Another characteristic of the SoTL mentioned by a group of authors in a collection of essays (Huber, Morreale and Sherwyn Eds., 2003) is that it has different features within different disciplines. Yet, some

common ground should be found among them, since they are all from the academic field and all have the same aim: to contribute to better teaching and better learning experiences which can be achieved only through an exchange of ideas and thoughts in inter- collegial practice.

It is also interesting to observe that the university professors in the United States had the same reaction as those in Macedonia regarding the introduction of SoTL in the criteria for academic promotion. In the volume from 2000, Hutchings says that SoTL should be motivated by personal commitments and not because it was listed in the criteria for promotion.

Based on the review of relevant literature from the field, our own definition is that SoTL in higher education refers to the systematic study of teaching and learning, their public sharing and review through presentations, performance, or publications with a final aim to improve student learning and enhance educational quality.

Interpretations in the Republic of Macedonia

In order to see how the broad definition of “Scholarship of Teaching and Learning” in the Law is interpreted and carried out in practice, we analysed the criteria for academic promotion at the two biggest state universities in the country and one private.

At the oldest and biggest state university, “Ss Cyril and Methodius”, the minimum general requirements are given in Article 1, according to which, besides the other requirements for an assistant professorship, including relevant qualifications and a certain number of publications, the candidate must demonstrate “achievements in the application of research results”. (Univerzitet Sv. Kiril and Metodij, Skopje, Prvilnici.) Then a detailed breakdown of points for every activity is provided in tables where there are four fields: teaching educational, scientific research, professional artistic (from the art disciplines) and professional applicable.

Following the definitions in the literature, we conclude that SoTL in this context equals the concept of “achievements in the application of research results” in the general explanation and the activities listed under the category - professional applicable. Some of the many items listed in this category are: published textbooks, dictionaries, feasibility studies, projects and taking part in commissions for different state competitions.

At the other state university, the State University of Tetovo, the situation is different. They do not have any other specific criteria coming from the general ones as stated in the Law and mentioned in the introduction to this paper. This means that the only measurable component is the part of publications, while the interpretations of the other two components referring to the application of research results and ability to perform certain types of educational activities are subject to vague and subjective judgments by the members of Commissions.

At SEEU, the Rule on Promotion in Scientific Title provides a detailed description of the criteria for academic promotion. Article 3 from the Rule (SEEU web page, Important documents - Rules in force) states that “the criteria for promotion recognize the priority of teaching, research and service”. In the appendix to the Rule, a detailed number of minimum required points and the ways of their distribution is given for each of these three categories. SoTL is mentioned explicitly in the part of research, more concretely as teaching and learning initiatives, with the following activities listed: effective involvement in, and leadership of funded and unfunded educational research, participation in professional teaching and learning organizations and/or disciplinary teaching and learning groups and their activities, contribution to internal or external teaching and learning fora, invitations to teach courses/guest lecturing at international institutions, editor/referee for scholarly journals in teaching and learning, publications and citations relating to teaching and learning in national/international peer reviewed educational journals/discipline based journals, and presentations of conference papers (invited and uninvited) on teaching and learning within the discipline or more generally.

With such a detailed description of the activities under the scope of SoTL at SEEU, it should be assumed that there are no uncertainties about its meaning among the staff. However, the information gathered through the informal interviews with members of academic staff show something quite the opposite.

Teachers’ understanding of SoTL

In order to check teachers’ understanding of the concept, we conducted informal interviews with 11 teachers at SEEU - 6 high lecturers, 3 assistant professors and 2 associate professors. The discussion with them was around two areas: 1. their understanding of the concept of SoTL and 2. their opinion about the evaluation of academic performance and criteria for academic promotion at SEEU (since SoTL is included in these criteria).

To our surprise, none of the interviewed teachers had a clear understanding of the concept. What is more, their reactions were all the same: that they did not know what the concept itself meant, what it was comprised of and how it was evaluated. They were all English speakers and could talk about the original meaning of the concept. They had no idea how it could be translated into the local languages they spoke – Albanian and Macedonian.

Regarding the second interview questions, criteria for academic promotion, the perception was that the system was complicated, but at the same time it was clear that it had been introduced in order to achieve higher objectivity and was generally considered as a positive step.

Students' views

Our aim with this paper was to clarify the concept and application of SoTL and in this way to have an impact on the evaluation criteria for SEEU academic promotion providing a clearer understanding of what these criteria should include and how they can be measured. This was supposed to lead further to evaluating the system existing at SEEU through a comparative analysis with other similar systems.

Including students' views in such an analysis was desirable. They are the ones who should benefit from all the academic activities undertaken by their professors, no matter whether teaching, research or other practical work. Therefore, we asked 24 students from the Master Programme in English Language Teaching to give their opinion about the most important qualities that teachers possess for their own (students') benefit and for teachers' academic progress.

They were asked to rate the following qualities that teachers possess in order of importance, according to their own perceptions: professional qualities and academic title, teaching experience, research and publications, ability to teach clearly and effectively, having friendly relations with students and to add something of their own, in addition to this list. The ability to teach clearly and effectively was chosen as the most important quality by the majority of students (41%). Second most important was teaching experience (33%); the next quality was professional qualifications and academic title (25%). Research and having friendly relations with students were not selected at all as important qualities for students' benefit but there were a few other qualities mentioned by some students: ability to give clear and timely feedback and being resourceful and motivating.

We consider this information as a very useful, especially because it comes from students that have a long learning experience and who have understanding of teaching methodology because of the nature of their studies.

Discussion

The basic conclusion from the literature review and the interviews with teachers and students is that the concept of "Scholarship of Teaching and Learning" is still vague in its meaning and interpretation. There is a tendency among teachers to view it as more related to teaching and learning, rather than to research and this is probably due to the practical implications of the concept. Students seem mostly to appreciate teaching abilities, specifically, what happens in the classroom, that teachers are able to facilitate their learning in a clear and understandable way and that they provide effective and timely feedback. The existing Rules for academic promotion at SEEU and UKiM are seen as a way to introduce greater objectivity into the process of academic promotion and teachers' evaluation.

The question is if they have managed to provide good evaluation criteria and to what extent they really measure the qualities of a good teacher at a high education institution. Do the teachers lose their battle in the classroom in their everyday struggle to collect points? Does teaching suffer because of research

activity? Can they be excellent in teaching, research and service at the same time? According to these American standards, a minimum competency is required, with excellence in one field.

“Teaching, research and creative work, and services which may be administrative, professional, or public are long standing University promotion criteria. A candidate for promotion (or tenure) should normally excel in at least one of the above categories and be at least satisfactory in the others.” (from the Academic Handbook, Indiana University School of Education).

In order to ensure that promotion criteria are fit for purpose, including the criteria for SoTL, decisions about important reforms in education and introducing new models at all levels (national, university) should include debates prior to any decision, with all parties involved (teachers, students, parents, experts, international bodies). Similarly, a regular review of policies is needed at all levels. No uncritical adoption of international models should be made. There should be preparation and adaptation to local contexts and/or application of the international standards only after reforms and changes. Ensuring that promotional procedures allow for excellence in one and not in all three categories (teaching, research and service) might reduce the feeling that staff are racing for points.

Are scholars of teaching experts in teaching? Our answer would be “yes”, but they should go beyond that and reach the public through sharing their knowledge and applying it in practice. Cambridge (2000, in Kreber, 2002) writes: “The scholarship of teaching is not aimed exclusively at publication. Scholars of teaching and learning are exploring multiple ways of making their work public, including the Internet, faculty development activities and public presentations”. (p.17)

Finally, as mentioned previously, very few or hardly anybody can be excellent in all the three areas of teaching, research and service. The Law and higher education institutions might consider certain modifications in order to achieve excellence in one category, whatever that is, and satisfactory results in the other two, rather than the same level of success in all three. Only in this way could we strive for the highest results based on individual preferences. Any other type of recognition of academic scholarship leads to unwelcome consequences and is not likely to contribute to raising the quality of higher education which is our primary goal.

REFERENCES

1. Frckovski, Lj. (2011). Visoko obrazovanie. Dnevnik. Retrieved from <http://www.dnevnik.mk/?ItemID=5B0FA98673441D4CBADDDDB10B5F95639> on 4.07.2014
2. Huber, M. T. Morreale T., Sherwyn P., Eds (2002). *Interdisciplinary Styles in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Exploring Common Ground*. American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Retrieved on 7.07.2014 from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED478800.pdf>
3. Hutchings, P. (2000). *Introduction to Opening Lines: Approaches to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*. Retrieved on 6.07.2014 from <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/sites/default/files/approaching.pdf>
4. Kreber, C. (2002). *Teaching Excellence, Teaching Expertise, and the Scholarship of Teaching*. *Innovative Higher Education*, Vol.27, No 1.
5. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 2001. Pearson Education Limited.
6. *Oxford Wordpower Dictionary*. 2004. Oxford University Press.
7. South East European University. Rules in force. <http://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/docs/rules.pdf>
8. Shulman, L. (2000). *From Minsk To Pinsk: Why A Scholarship Of Teaching And Learning?* *Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (JoSoTL)*, Volume 1, Number 1 (2000), pp. 48-53.
9. Univerzitet Sv. Kiril I Metodij, Skopje. Pravitnici. http://www.ukim.edu.mk/mk_dok.php?jazik=1&kid=3&gid=1
10. Zakon za visoko obrazovanie na RM. (14.03.2008). PRAVO.org.mk. Retrieved from <http://www.pravo.org.mk/documentDetail.php?id=799> on 1.07.2014

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSTRUCTIVE AND APPLICABLE PRE AND POST TEACHING OBSERVATION FEEDBACK

Luiza Zeqiri

l.zeqiri@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract

The feedback provided before or received after the teaching observation process is crucial in order to have better learning and teaching results. Therefore, this study investigates the influence of teaching observation feedback on teachers' performance in the classroom. The participants in this study were 15 teachers from the Language Centre and the Faculty of Languages, Cultures and Communication at SEEU. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used for the data collection. The instruments used were in the form of a teacher questionnaire and in the form of unstructured interviews with ten of the teachers, selected randomly. The research concludes that constructive and actionable post-observation feedback can facilitate teachers to improve their teaching practices. Also, the findings show that enough time should be spent and attention paid for both pre-observation and post-observation stages. Interestingly, the majority of the participants found the teaching observation process to be very stressful. However, they claimed that positive feedback motivates them to improve their future performance.

Keywords: *feedback, observation, performance, learning, teaching*

Introduction

An observation process requires a lot of attention in order to achieve better learning and teaching results by improving teachers' weaknesses and reinforcing their strengths. Continuous, accurate and constructive observation feedback has been shown to help teachers improve their teaching practices. Different universities use different methods to provide feedback to their staff. For instance, in SEEU¹ announced graded observations have been conducted, with judgments from *unsatisfactory*, *satisfactory*, *good*, *very good* to the best grade of *outstanding*. The observation procedure is well-defined and explained. The teachers are provided with all the necessary documents before the observation process starts. They receive the procedure for staff evaluation, the observation scheme and the feedback form by email. Every teacher goes through a pre and post-observation meeting with the observer. Having finished with all the observations, an annual report with the results is sent to all the staff and students.

At SEEU, the teaching observation process is of a high importance because its purpose is not only to improve teachers' performances and to identify good practices and areas for improvement, but it is also used for promotion. So, the intention of classroom observations is not only to train the teachers or to share different teaching methods with each other and to provide teachers with productive teaching techniques, but also to collect data for every teacher's performance. This collected data are a crucial element when it comes to teachers' promotions because classroom observation evaluation is taken into consideration when teachers are to be promoted or reappointed.

Knowing the importance of the teaching observation process, it is useful to find out how teachers who are being observed perceive the whole process and the procedures for classroom observations. Particularly, in order to achieve more productive teacher and student performance outcomes, with better observation evaluations, it is important to investigate the effectiveness of the feedback which is given before and after the classroom observation. O'Leary (2014), in his book *Classroom Observation: A Guide to the Effective Observation of Teaching and Learning* includes a citation from a UK government report in 2004 which says: "an essential element of teacher training is the observation of the trainee's teaching and constructive feedback". Accordingly, this study will investigate the influence of teaching observation feedback on the teacher's performance in the classroom. It will provide real experiences from teachers' practice. Moreover, suggestions and techniques on how to conduct pre and post observation conferences will be described.

Previous Studies

Even though there is previous research about the importance and the influence of the teaching observation process on improving teacher performance, there are still many dilemmas about the best observation

¹ South East European University

practices and a need for research suggesting more applicable techniques and strategies to be used during teaching observation. Teachers and researchers who want to investigate the importance of a classroom observation process are constantly in search for insightful ideas or techniques and for more updated and relevant studies which explore the impact of the observation feedback on teachers' performance. The results from different studies can be helpful not only for improving teaching (a foreign language in this case), but also for developing better observation practices. As a result, it is essential to have more studies related to the observation process and feedback in an EFL classroom.

This section will cover some important existing studies related to the observation process including pre-observation and post-observation feedback investigated by different researchers. For example, Stuhlman, Hamre, Downer & Pianta (n.d.) from the University of Virginia in their *Practitioner's Guide to Conducting Classroom Observations: What the Research Tells Us About Choosing and Using Observational Systems to Assess and Improve Teacher Effectiveness (part 1)* say that "professional development, evaluation and feedback" are crucial to achieving improvement in teaching. They are of the opinion that individual and continuous training should be provided to teachers if we want them to perform better. Furthermore, they say that outstanding observations should be used in the observation process to motivate the teachers.

The following is a very insightful view from Stuhlman, Hamre, Downer & Pianta about teacher observation. They state that teacher observation can:

Help define clear goals and create a shared purpose, provide an objective method for measuring progress towards these goals and provide a framework for giving constructive and focused feedback that helps teachers incorporate higher levels of desired behaviors into their interactions with students in the classroom.

The National Union of Teachers (2006) has written about 'The Conduct of Classroom Observations' in the "Performance Management Regulations (England and Wales) in A Classroom Observation Protocol: N.U.T. Guidance for School Representatives" where they say that teachers should be observed by professionals and with a positive and helpful approach. It is also stated that "observations should be neither intrusive nor threatening".

Finally, it is important to mention the results from Jerald's (2012) investigation about "Ensuring Accurate Feedback from Observations." In his article published by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, it is stated that providing feedback is a difficult process but "students benefit greatly when teachers are provided accurate, actionable feedback that helps them improve classroom practices".

Previous Studies about Pre-observation Feedback

Zaare (2013) says that pre-observation conferences are useful because these sessions help the teachers feel more relaxed and give the observer a clearer picture of the aims of the lesson to be observed. Then

she adds that “classroom observations allow educators and administrators to improve not only classrooms, but schools as a whole”.

Guidance and suggestions related to pre-observation sessions are given in “Performance Management Regulations (England and Wales) in A Classroom Observation Protocol (2006)” by the National Union of Teachers. It is explained why teachers are observed, the steps of the observation process are included and “aims and objectives of the lesson” are discussed.

Previous Studies about Post-observation Feedback

The importance of post-observation feedback is also a topic discussed and explored by many researchers. Authors have investigated the role which post-observation conferences play in improving teacher’s practice. There are studies which show that teachers and researchers give the same value to both pre and post-observation feedback sessions. However, there is existing literature which shows that observers focus more on the post-observation feedback. Even though teachers generally prefer receiving more detailed and applicable pre-observation feedback, still the focus is mainly on the post-observation session. This is evident from the existing research and from the evaluation of the process (experience with classroom observations and data gathered from teacher interviews).

The article “Professional Development Resource Guide for Adults” (n.d.) provides teachers and researchers with many helpful techniques which can help the observers and the teachers have more constructive discussions and better outcomes. For example, there is a very good suggestion on how to deal with teachers who haven’t performed well: “using non-accusatory questions or observations such as *I wasn’t certain why students were . . . , I noticed students were having difficulty with...*”.

Moreover, Myung & Martinez (2013) in their article: “Strategies for Enhancing the Impact of Post-observation Feedback for Teacher observations” mention other strategies which can improve the quality of the post-observation meetings. This may be done, for instance, by setting a positive tone so the teachers feel protected. In their study, they give a very thoughtful description of the relationship between the observer and the teacher and about the observation process in general. They state that:

If the teacher positively appraises his own abilities, has knowledge of the evaluation process, trusts his relationship with his administrators, and has a sense of belonging in the school community, it is likely the teacher will experience this evaluative moment as a challenge –an opportunity to share his strengths and receive feedback in how to improve.

Then, they add that:

If the teacher is uncertain about what to expect from the observation and feedback process, lacks trust in his administrator, or doesn’t feel a sense of belonging in the school community, it is likely that teacher will experience the observation and feedback process as a threat.

Montgomery (2002) in her book suggests that those who can't say positive things to others should never become observers because teachers want to hear about their strengths. She adds that the teachers after the observation feedback should feel happy, encouraged and ready to improve their teaching.

Finally, it is important for the observers to be trained and prepared when they engage in a dialogue with the observed teachers. Watson-Davis (2009) has created a lesson observation pocketbook and there he gives some questions which can be used to have more productive feedback. For instance, "What pace and challenge did you notice in the lesson? What would you look to improve/change next time you deliver this lesson? How happy are you with the lesson and why?"

Present Study

The following are the research questions designed to examine the impact of teacher observation feedback.

- #1. What is the influence of pre and post-observation feedback on improving teaching practices?
- #2. What are teachers' attitudes towards pre and post-observation stages?
- #3. Which are teachers' preferences regarding the observation process?

Participants in the study were 15 English teachers from the Language Centre and from the Faculty of Languages Cultures and Communication. All the teachers were employees at South East European University in Tetovo.

It could be noted that the study has two limitations. There was a limited number of teacher participants which might affect the results. Secondly, having teacher participants who were observers as well might have an influence on the reliability of the gathered data. Future research can investigate the influence of peer observation on teacher performance with a bigger number of participants, including further analysis of staff who are also observers, and more focus on pre-observation feedback.

Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used for the data collection. A teacher questionnaire was administered and the teacher respondents answered the questionnaire items anonymously. Another instrument used was an unstructured teacher interview. Interviews were conducted with some of the teacher participants. Detailed notes were taken from the interview discussions. The third instrument for data collection was evaluation of the process. Some observed classes and received feedback reports were discussed and analyzed together with the observed teachers.

Findings and Results

The teachers were very positive that a lot of attention should be paid to pre and post-observation sessions. Nine teachers strongly agreed and six agreed that feedback during these two stages of the observation is very important. It is interesting that teachers were willing to receive feedback and suggestions and they said that they want these sessions to last longer and to be conducted in more details.

As shown in Figure 1 below, most of the teachers (11 out of 15) strongly agreed that constructive and actionable post-observation feedback can help teachers improve their teaching practices. Three teachers agreed and one was neutral. None of the teachers disagreed. This was also discussed during the interview with the teachers and every teacher except one thought that the pre-observation session was essential. The one teacher felt it was not essential because sometimes teachers might have unannounced observations where a pre-meeting would not happen. It could be hypothesized that having teacher participants who were observers as well has had an influence on the reliability of the gathered data. The results from the third questionnaire item show that positive observation feedback encourages teachers to perform better in the classroom. Nine teachers out of 15 strongly agreed with this statement and six other teachers agreed. There wasn't a single teacher who disagreed with this item.

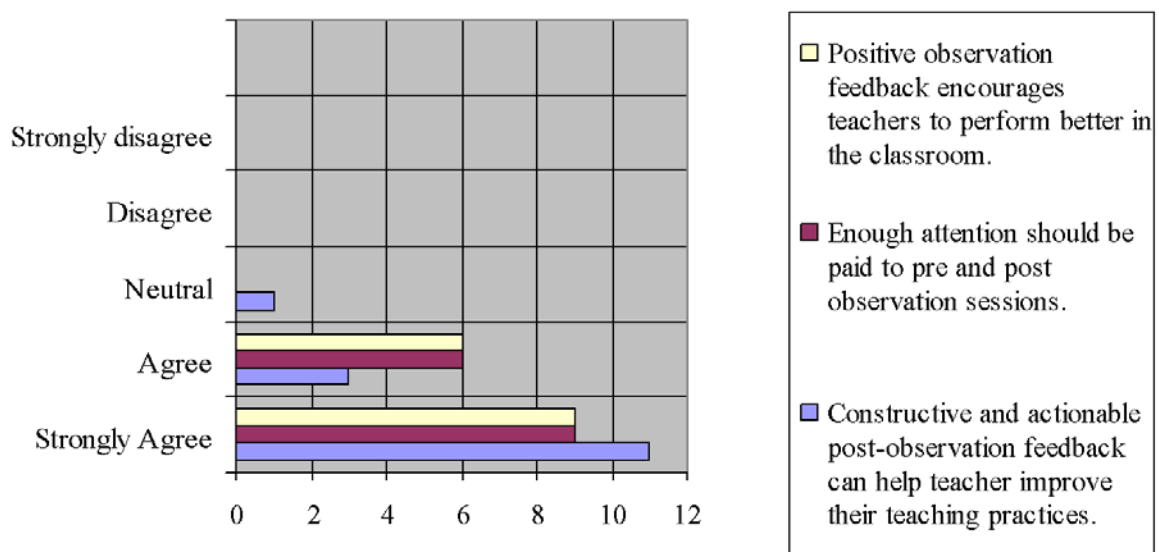


Figure 1.

When asked if negative feedback de-motivates teachers to perform better in the classroom (see figure 2.) seven teachers strongly agreed and one agreed. Four out of 15 were neutral and only three teachers disagreed that negative feedback can have an influence on their classroom performance.

Next, eight teachers strongly agreed and four agreed that the classroom observation process is stressful. Three of the teachers were neutral and none of the teachers disagreed. From here we can hypothesize that the classroom observation process is stressful for the teachers. This is in correlation with Lam's (2001) conclusion which states "It is a common phenomenon that teachers do not welcome classroom observation although it is widely accepted as an important component in staff development and appraisal". It can be assumed that neutral and negative results might be as a result of the negative attitudes due to the observation process or due to the promotional ramifications.

Surprisingly, when asked if the classroom observation process was very useful, ten out of 15 teachers were neutral. One teacher strongly agreed and another agreed that the observation process is very productive. On the other hand there were two teachers who strongly disagreed and one who disagreed.

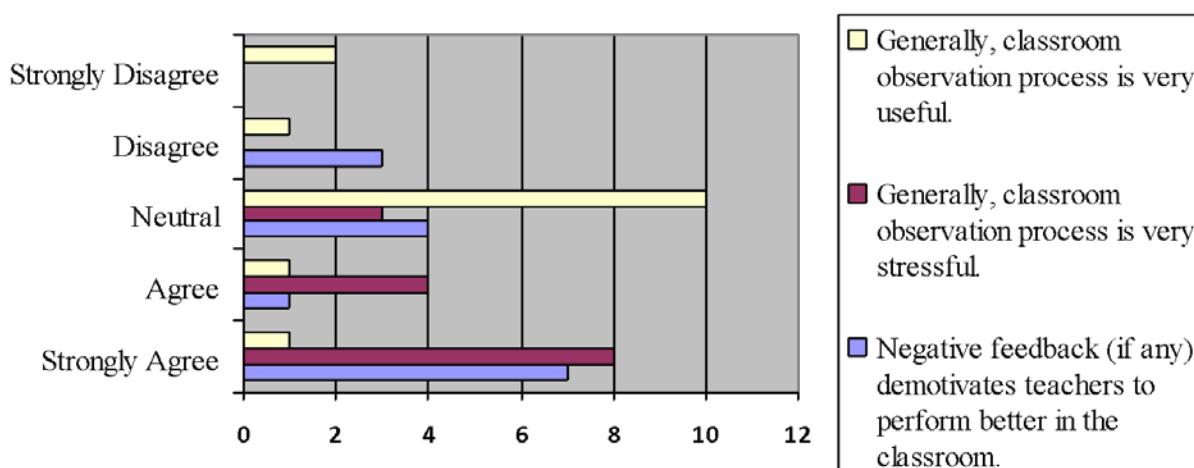


Figure 2.

The other questionnaire items required the teachers' opinions and experiences related to teaching observation feedback. For instance, when asked if they had any general recommendations on what kind of feedback they wanted to receive (see Appendix A), the teachers answered as follows:

Teacher A:

"After the observation the feedback should have specific suggestions on what the teacher could have done differently."

Teacher B:

"Feedback which includes useful tips for improving the teaching process."

Teacher C:

"The feedback should not have critical approach! It should give a general overview and not tell how it could be different. The observers should be trained and acquainted with the nature of the LC classes and students."

Teacher D:

"List both positive and negative sides and not to concentrate on the negative sides only."

Teacher E:

"I like to receive feedback with a constructive and different point of view, a new idea that had not yet occurred to me to try. Something I would definitely remember and use in future classes."

Teacher F:

"It's useful to give positive pre-observation feedback in order to help the teacher prepare the lesson plan and meet the lesson goals. If the lesson plan doesn't meet the objectives the observer should point that in the pre-observation feedback and give adequate suggestions and comments as well as help the teacher in planning the lesson."

Teacher G:

"It is important that that the observers are competent and that I respect their judgment of my pedagogical performance."

To sum up, the majority of the teachers said that they preferred receiving detailed and positive feedback. Most of the teacher participants wanted to receive feedback from which they would be able to learn something new, specifically they wanted tips and suggestions on how to improve their teaching practices. Finally, teachers wanted to have more carefully organized and planned pre-observation sessions. The last questionnaire item asked the teachers to give their own definitions of effective pre and post-observation feedback (see appendix A). The following are definitions given by the teachers.

Teacher A:

“The teacher and the observer should work together on what precisely is needed to be shown during the observation. The feedback should genuinely be educative in its nature, meaning that the observer should clearly state what the teacher is doing well and what is not so good.”

Teacher B:

“Pre-observation feedback should be effective and useful for both the teacher and the observer. If there are any problems like the lesson is too complicated to be taught in class, the observer should help the teacher plan the lesson plan, point out at [sic] specific goals that need to be achieved so that the lesson should be adequate for that class.”

Teacher C:

“In the post-observation feedback, the observer should first comment on teacher’s positive sides and if there are any negative points, help her/him overcome them by explaining in detail what can be done. problem in teacher’s style of teaching/how to engage the students more, what effective methods should she/he use in order to make the class more interactive.”

Teacher D:

“In an effective pre-observation feedback all the specific aspects of a certain group of learners (proficiency level, motivation, real needs, students’ perceived wants and interests, attendance, etc), anticipated problems, desired/planned goals and objectives as well as methodology for achieving them are discussed.”

Teacher E:

“The teacher could also be provided with a check list of items to be demonstrated during the observed lesson (for instance, more than one way of teaching new vocabulary; more than one error correction technique; elicitation techniques; concept checking of new vocabulary, etc.) In an effective post observation feedback session, the teacher should be given a chance to explain why each step was taken.”

Teacher F:

“The teacher should be offered alternative options (to choose from in the future) for all the items that were evaluated poorly. Pre and post observation feedback are of equal importance and should not be taken for granted.”

Teacher G:

“It would be feedback with excellent communication between the teacher and the observer, what the teacher expects to achieve and what the observer would like to see achieved, clearly set guidelines of both their expectations, and analysis of whether the objectives were met, in which way, if they were beneficial, and how they could have been more effective (if applicable).”

Teacher H:

“I think that we shouldn’t have a pre-observation session. As for post observation, the main observer should give advice on how to improve a certain field.”

Teacher I:

“The most useful feedback (as for student assignments) is given soon after the observation. Comments should be constructive and aimed at suggesting weaknesses the teacher may not him/herself be aware of. Many teachers feel threatened by the observation process; however, if approached in the right spirit, it can be a constructive process.”

Teacher J:

“Pre-observation meetings should last longer (not only handing in the materials, weaknesses should be discussed and the observer should give recommendations). In post-observation meetings-both observers should be present because the observers always blame the co-observers for the negative comments and they are not present to prove it. Both pre and post observation feedback should be more friendly oriented and not threatening. Observers should be perfect performers/teachers if it is their job to evaluate others.”

Teacher K:

“In the pre-observation feedback the lecturers should get ideas on improving different parts of the lesson and suggestions for any questions that the lecturer might have. After the observed lesson, the lecturer should get positive feedback and feedback for improvement related to the observed lesson and practical suggestions should be given.”

Teacher L:

“The pre-observation session should be taken more seriously and the observer should give specific ideas on what they find problematic in the lesson plan. Post-observation feedback would be more effective with constructive feedback and flexible point of view as each teacher has a different teaching style. I also think that observers should have unified standards when observing.”

Teacher M:

“An effective pre-observation feedback/discussion would mainly consist of the conversation between the observer and the teacher on items such as main course goals, session goals, specific objectives, student expectations, strategies and methods, and concerns prior to holding the class. Post-observation feedback should be carried out in a friendly and positive atmosphere, reflecting on the above mentioned issues with the only aim in mind and i.e. improvement of the teaching/learning process and nothing else but that.”

Conclusions

It can be concluded that teaching observation feedback is one of the most important elements of the observation process. The majority of the teachers agreed that having a productive conferencing with the observer before the observation process can be very beneficial for them. During the unstructured interviews with the teachers, it was concluded that through the pre-observation process many dilemmas can be explained and as a result, the evaluation reports will be more positive. Summing up, constructive and applicable pre-observation feedback was perceived as vital to helping teachers improve their performance. Post-observation feedback was also a significant stage of the observation process. All the teachers said that post-observation feedback is very important because they want to see how their teaching was evaluated. They were worried if the feedback hasn't been fair or has been de-motivating. The teachers became very emotional while talking about post-observation feedback. There were teachers who gave specific examples of the feedback which they had received and which has discouraged them to continue working hard. On the other hand, there were also teachers who said that they have received very constructive feedback which has changed their classroom practices for the better.

The following are the main conclusions and suggestions made by the teacher respondents.

1. Constructive and actionable pre and post-observation feedback can facilitate teachers to improve their teaching practices. If teachers are given applicable feedback, they will apply the feedback and strive for continuous improvement.
2. The majority of the participants found the teaching observation process as stressful. The reason behind this as some of the respondents explained was the impact that the evaluation report had on their promotion. They were worried that if something went wrong during the classroom observation it would affect their career and position.
3. Positive feedback motivated the teachers to improve their future performance. The teachers who received *outstanding* (the highest evaluation grade) on their observations wanted to continue with the same grade and therefore worked progressively during all the semester.
4. Most of the participants agreed that non-constructive feedback had a threatening, de-motivating effect with a negative impact. There were cases when teachers mentioned how they have felt many years ago if they thought that the received feedback was badly given and unfair.
5. Objective, fair, constructive, unified, accurate, encouraging and applicable feedback was preferred by most of the teachers. They also said that they have received constructive and applicable feedback which was shown to be very productive with a profound effect on their performance.

Summing up, the results of the study are in correlation with Myung and Martinez (2013) who talk about the “relationship between feedback conversations and the anxiety a person can feel in a high pressure

performance setting”. They concluded that feedback can either de-motivate the teachers or it can help them with their teaching based on the efficacy of the observation procedure.

At the end, if teaching observations are conducted in a fair manner and by trained observers, then the teachers will improve their teaching practice. As a result, students will benefit from these teachers. Moreover, the quality of teaching and learning will help the university get promoted.

References

1. Jerald, G. (2012). Ensuring Accurate Feedback from observations. Perspectives on Practice. Bill & Melinda Gates foundation. Retrieved from <https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/Documents/ensuring-accuracy-wp.pdf>
2. Lam, S. F. (2001). Educators' opinions on classroom observation as a practice of staff development and appraisal. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 17, 161-173. DOI: 10.1016/S0742-051X(00)00049-4
3. Montgomery, D. (2002). Helping teachers develop through classroom observation. David Fulton Publishers. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/oxurcxt>
4. Myung, J. & Martinez, K. (2013). Strategies for Enhancing the Impact of Post-observation Feedback for Teacher observations. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Retrieved from http://cdn.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/BRIEF_Feedback-for-Teachers.pdf
5. National Union of Teachers. (2006). A Classroom Observation Protocol: Nut Guidance for School Representatives. Retrieved from <http://www.teachers.org.uk/files/active/0/Observation4798.pdf>
6. O'Lary, M. (2014). Classroom Observation: A Guide to the Effective Observation of Teaching and learning. Routlege. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/lwtqsnr>
7. Professional Development Resource Guide for Adults. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.calpro-online.org/pubs/b_observ.pdf
8. Stuhlman, M. W., Hamre, B. K., Downer, J. T. & Pianta, R.C. (n.d.) Practitioner's Guide to Conducting Classroom Observations (part 1). Retrieved from http://curry.virginia.edu/uploads/resourceLibrary/CASTL_practitioner_Part1_single.pdf
9. Watson-Davis, R. (2009). Lesson observation pocketbook. British Library Cataloguing-in Publication Data. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/q7txvxt>. isbn:1906610002
10. Zaare, M. (2013). An Investigation into the Effect of Classroom Observation on Teaching Methodology *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 70 (2013) 605 – 614. DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.01.099

Appendix A

1. Constructive and actionable post-observation feedback can help teachers improve their teaching practice.
a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree
2. Enough attention should be paid to the pre and post observation sessions.
a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree
3. Positive observation feedback encourages teachers to perform better in the classroom.
a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree
4. Negative feedback (if any) demotivates teachers to work harder in the future.
a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree
5. Generally the observation process is very stressful.
a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree
6. Generally the observation process is very useful.
a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree
7. Do you have any specific request on what kind of feedback you want to receive? If yes, what.

8. What is your definition of an effective observation feedback from which teachers can benefit and improve their performance? Please give a more elaborate comment.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH AN OBSERVATION PROCESS

Rashit Emini

r.emini@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract

The paper examines the role of a teaching observation process as an Internal Quality Assurance Process for improving the quality of teaching and learning at South East European University (SEEU). In particular, the paper tries to reveal the views and perceptions of various parties such as management, teachers and students about the teaching observation process and its impact on quality teaching and learning. The paper, therefore, examines the process of the evaluation of teaching and learning and professional development at the institution. In terms of research methodology, inductive research methods are used (interviews and questionnaires) as well as an analysis of records on teaching observation. These methods aim to investigate views and perceptions of the management, teachers and students involved in the teaching observation process at SEEU. Finally, the paper makes conclusions and recommendations.

Key words: *quality teaching and learning, views and perceptions, evaluation of teaching, professional development, impact*

Introduction

Today, knowledge is considered to be the driver of economic, social and political development. Therefore, higher education policy makers are striving to create knowledge-driven higher education institutions and to offer the best quality teaching and learning opportunities to students in all levels of higher education. Quality teaching is one of the most valuable quality services to students that supports their achievement, and higher education policy makers try to provide policies that would support academic achievement in higher education institutions.

In line with this, SEEU Management has constructed internal quality assurance policies that continuously evaluate and support teaching and learning in the University. Among its quality assurance mechanisms, it has introduced observations of teaching and learning as a mechanism to assess teaching and learning practices and at the same time to help teachers improve their practice.

Until recently, the process of observation has been ‘announced’. This means that teachers would be notified of class observation some time before the observation. This system envisages three stages: pre-observation, observation and post-observation. This kind of observation involves the observed teacher in the process and makes it more transparent. However, one year ago, the management decided to add to their quality control mechanisms one more element and that is ‘unannounced’ observation.

For some time, the process of observation in the University has been commented on in different ways by various parties involved in the process. Some have praised the process, whereas others complained and objected.

Therefore, this paper tries to reveal some of the perceptions and views of all parties involved about both announced and unannounced observations. In addition, it tries to reveal the trends of progress that this quality assurance process has managed to produce from 2005 until 2013, referring to data provided by the Quality Office at the University.

Research questions and hypothesis

- How is the teaching observation process at SEE University carried out?
- What is the rationale behind the announced and unannounced teaching observation process?
- What are teachers’ views and perceptions about the teaching observation process?
- What are students’ views and perceptions about the teaching observation process?
- What are the trends of teaching and learning at SEE University?

The hypothesis for this paper is that the observation process at SEE University is in close correlation between rationale and perceptions of the majority of teachers and students.

Literature review

Most of the studies consulted for this paper focus on the importance of observation of teaching and learning in supporting quality studies in Higher Education, especially through reflective practice combined with professional development. They reveal the importance of observation especially in improving teacher quality and providing quality service to students.

The research shows that some form of teaching observation has become part of everyday academic life. In different universities, the models of teaching observations used vary. In some, only peer observations for professional development are carried out, whereas in others the observation process is used for both professional development and as part of the teacher annual evaluation process and academic promotion, namely hiring staff, continuing contracts, termination of employment and for compensation or reward (Taylor & Tyler, 2012).

According to Al-Habsi (2004) and Williams (1989) in Namaghi (2011), peer observation or as otherwise called formative observation provides an opportunity for teachers to take charge of their own development rather than judging teachers' professional skills, and gives university management an understanding of how teachers are teaching and implementing their plans in practice. Moreover, observed classes should be used to assess the extent to which teaching techniques and activities encourage and enable students to grasp the material and eventually learn and develop the expected skills. Therefore, this kind of observation has educational purposes and supports learning (Namaghi, 2011). Researchers oppose judgmental summative observation, since according to Freeman (1982) in Namaghi (2011) instead of enhancing the process of reflection leading to better achievement and professional growth, it intentionally focuses on fault finding. Furthermore, it creates a stressful atmosphere, it is partial and non-representative, the observation is carried out by non-professionals and non-trained observers, it is not valid and it creates faulty reasoning (Freeman, 1982: Namaghi, 2011). In addition, Murdock (2000) in Namaghi (2011) states that reflective practice, empowering and motivating teachers and assessing all aspects of a teacher's professional activity are listed as very important factors in a progressive teacher performance review system. The value of formative observation lies in the process and not just the product as is the case with summative or judgmental observation (Fanselow, 1990: Al-Habsi: 2004). Moreover, formative observation helps new teachers in learning from observing more experienced teachers and observing each other (Al-Habsi, 2004).

On the other side, Taylor & Tyler (2012) argue that a well designed judgmental observation might increase the information about individual teaching practice and could encourage teachers to be more self reflective. Moreover, it could provide additional opportunities for discussion with other teachers and administrators about effective practice. Therefore, a well designed teacher evaluation programme mainly focused on judgmental observations could have a direct and lasting effect on individual teacher performance. For instance, veteran teachers in Cincinnati became more effective in raising students' math

test scores the year they participated in the evaluation programme, and even more effective in the years after evaluation. This was measured by student scores in the evaluation process. This suggests that teachers developed skills or changed their behaviour. An explanation for this could be that teachers learned new information about their performance during the evaluation process and eventually developed new skills. (Taylor & Tyler, 2012).

According to Kemp and Gosling (2000) in Hatzipanagos and Lygo-Baker (2006) ‘observations can have two distinct purposes: managerial, a desire to evaluate the quality of teaching that is bound up in the accountability agenda within higher education; and developmental or enhancing the quality of teaching by identifying gaps or weaknesses and offering professional development to improve teaching’. In line with this, Wilkerson (n.d.) gives an even more detailed explanation about the difference between observations for the purpose of evaluation and professional development and as he calls it ‘improvement’. He explains that the main difference is in the degree of participation of the observed teacher in the formulations of the conclusions about the quality of teaching (Wilkerson, n.d.). He emphasizes the importance of teachers’ ownership of the process of observation through which an increase in the responsibility of the teacher to make decisions about his/ her improvement of teaching is looked for. This is also called collaborative teacher observation which is characterized by involving teachers in the discussions before and after the observation with judgments which are descriptive and are reached strictly in collaboration with the teacher observed (Wilkerson, n.d.). This kind of observation is more collegial, makes teachers aware of the expectations and involves them in the process.

Similarly, Gosling (2002) points out that there are three models of observations that are usually implemented in higher education. The first model has to do with peers observing each other and is considered a developmental model. The second observation model involves specialists from the field who would help in the process of improving the quality of teachers and teaching in general. The third model is more managerial or inspectorial. Engaging two observers in the process of observation, one internal and the other external, the latter playing a secondary arbitrary role is recommended (Bell, 2001: Hatzipanagos and Lygo-Baker, 2006). If we carry out observations for developmental purposes, then educational developers or specialists in teaching can give an extraordinary contribution, especially in newly established universities or with new teachers. Furthermore, involving an external specialist can produce more objective assessments and further suggestions for improvement and therefore teachers would not hesitate to collaborate.

Whatever method of observation is used there is often a discomfort and resistance among staff about the observations. They feel more relaxed when they are alone with their students in class. Reservations about observations have been identified by Peel (2005: Gosling, 2009) who confirm that there is a discomfort with observations. Cosh (1998: Gosling, 2009) expressed some concerns about the observation of teaching and its impact on students’ learning, that is, the dynamics of teaching. He said: “Given the

subjective nature of notions of good teaching, different learner preferences, and the lack of proof of how students learn most successfully, it seems that none of us are qualified to make judgments on the teaching of our peers, and that our judgments are, therefore, of questionable value to anyone other than ourselves.’’ This point of view is also supported by Gosling (2009) who noted that during a workshop, a video of some teaching was shown and different participants made different judgments about the teaching shown in the video. Because of this, Gosling (2009) claims that many observers are not well equipped to evaluate and provide effective feedback on the effectiveness of others’ teaching (Gosling and O’Connor, 2009). However, Edgerton (1992) encourages faculty to lay aside their reservations and support the process of observations since without this process there is a risk of lowering the standards of teaching. He recommends moving ahead with the search for more effective methods of peer review (Edgerton,1992: Millis,1992). The process prompts instructors to think about what they do and about strategies for doing it better, thus leading to subsequent teaching improvements (Millis, 1992). However, as Millis (1992) points out, such benefits cannot be realized unless the observations are conducted systematically over time by trained observers. Systematic observations can maintain the focus of teachers in continuous improvement of their teaching by seeking various methods of teaching and student assessment so that the overall outcome shows an increase in student learning, which is the ultimate goal of every teacher and teaching institution.

We can conclude that the majority of cited scholars support the process of observation and think that the process of observation is carried out to improve the quality of teaching and learning, regardless of the fact that no single observation process is considered to be the best one and that the processes vary in different institutions worldwide. There exist various models and in most cases institutions combine the models. The most common and accepted model is peer observation in which teachers observe one another to help improve their work or young teachers observe more experienced teachers to improve their own teaching. A common concern is that the process of observation is perceived as stressful. Furthermore, the literature review also reveals that teachers perceive the process as an intrusive process which interferes with their job, limits their academic freedom and is conducted for managerial purposes rather than to help teachers improve. Also, the process is sometimes not well organized and the methodology disliked, although there are scholars who promote a combination of two or more models with teachers’ inclusion so that the process is well received by everyone and encourages teachers to participate in the process positively.

Finally, an ongoing observation process builds a quality culture within teaching institutions and increases teachers’ belief in the process as being developmental and by this increases the teachers’ satisfaction with the process.

National context

As for the legislation for higher education in Macedonia, it identifies universities as being responsible for quality assurance as modeled by European standards for evaluation in accordance with the Bologna Process. Moreover, the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area emphasize the responsibility of higher education institutions for quality assurance. However, although the state legislation imposes Quality Assurance Systems in higher education in Macedonia, there are no specifications as regards the Quality Assurance mechanisms to be implemented in each higher education institution. It is up to each higher education institution to determine which instruments or procedures to apply, at which organizational levels and which competencies the organizational units of the internal quality assurance to have. This allows institutions (particularly private universities) to develop systems and processes in consistency with their own targets and requirements and to use external support for this purpose when needed.

Both public and private universities in the Republic of Macedonia should take their own responsibility for providing quality higher education. Each university is obliged to establish Internal Quality Assurance Systems to ensure quality service for students and other stakeholders and at the same time ensure that academic freedom is respected.

Case study

At SEEU, the annual observation process is one of several instruments in the hands of management to evaluate the quality of teaching for all academic staff. The rationale from the procedure is providing quality assurance at both faculty and university level, ensuring qualitative learning experience for students, acknowledging excellent teaching and learning practice and staff development and improvement of quality teaching and learning across the university. This research investigates the rationale of having the process of observations introduced at SEEU and reveals some of the perceptions of staff and students about this process.

Methodology

The following research methods were used: questionnaire for teachers, a questionnaire for students, an interview with the SEEU Quality Advisor and an analysis of the teaching observations data collected by the Quality Office.

With regards to the questionnaires, a total of 54 teachers and 227 students from all faculties completed surveys about their experience of observation.

Results

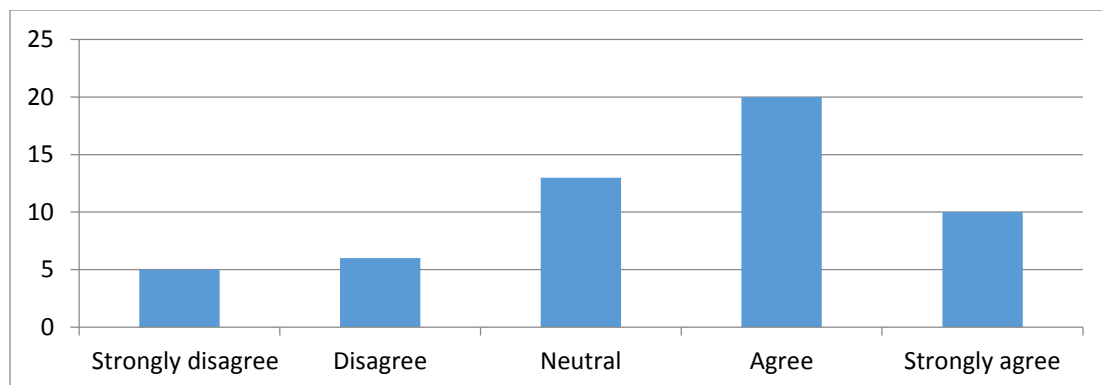
The interview with the Quality Advisor revealed that the observation procedure at SEEU started seven years ago with a pilot project which, because it was successful, was developed into a standard quality

procedure. It started very much in line with supporting good practice and over a number of years has made staff more aware and supported staff using different methodologies, as measured by the reports and data. Furthermore, the procedure on the observations has undergone many changes over the years since it started to be implemented as a response to teachers' continuous comments on the process.

In terms of achievements from the process, the Quality Advisor's expectations were not primarily linked to rising trends in the graphs, since according to her this is not mathematics, although even the graphs show progress except for the part of 'measuring progress' which is always the weakest part. For her, the process was more valid when an individual teacher thought about their teaching and changed something or tried something. This meant that the intention was to embed quality culture with self-reflection. It was more about raising awareness and taking care of the quality of service that is provided to students.

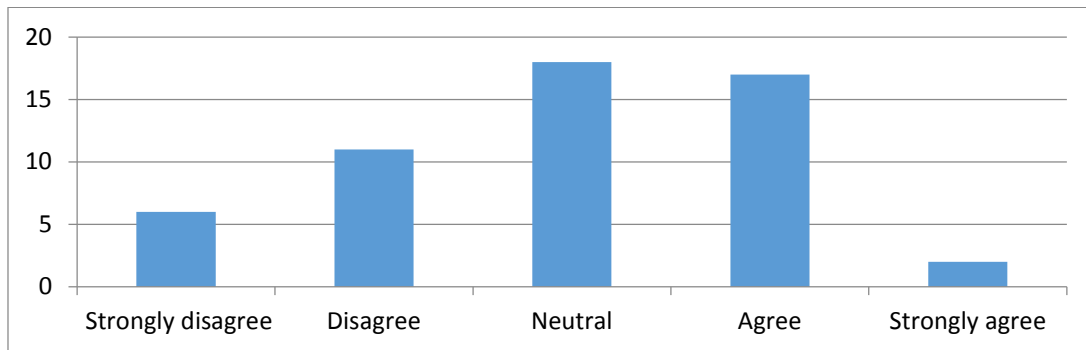
According to the Quality Advisor, the biggest weakness and doubt may be if judgments should be used or not, although they enable better analysis of data and can be used to show trends. Some teachers argue about judgments rather than focusing on the advice. There are some positives and some negatives with the judgments. However, the most important thing is that the reports include written advice that the observers provide to the teachers which are directions and suggestions on how to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

With regard to the teachers' opinions, graph 1.1 below shows that the majority of teachers agree that the process of observation gives positive results in terms of producing quality teaching and learning. There are some comments from a few teachers who suggest that specialists from the respective fields or better qualified observers be engaged in the process of observation. Moreover, some of them suggest that observations should focus more on the content than on methodology. In line with this suggestion, the Quality Advisor gave an example where an external reviewer engaged at SEEU, reported that the knowledge level of some classes needed deepening which was not easy to highlight with the current focus on methodology. The Quality Advisor concluded, 'Maybe the content is not up to date or deep enough and for years we have discussed how to observe the content, but the problem is that some senior professors resist being observed by their peers in the faculty saying that their colleagues are not competent to observe them.'



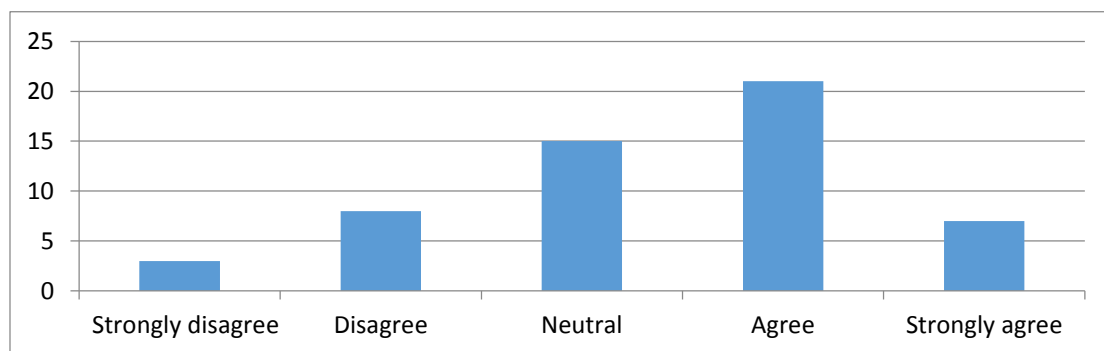
Graph 1.1 – Statement 1 – The main purpose of observation is ensuring quality teaching

Graph 1.2 indicates that teachers take observations seriously since they think that this process, besides its usefulness in terms of professional development, represents a criterion for promotion and extension of contracts. However, there were teachers who thought that the process of observation should not punish teachers but help them with improving their teaching. The Quality Advisor agreed that over the years the process of observation has become more linked to performance management since now it is part of promotions and annual staff evaluation.



Graph 1.2 – Statement 2 – The main purpose of observation is for contractual purposes and promotion of teachers to scientific titles.

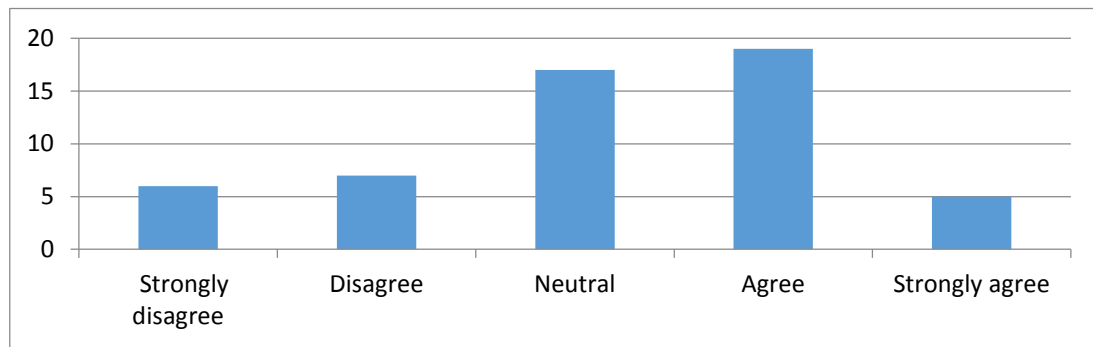
Graph 1.3 shows that the teachers’ general opinion is that the process of observation helps with better teaching and learning. Most of them commented that the observation process is an important component of good teaching practice. There are also teachers who think differently. Eleven of them out of fifty four think that even without the process of observation, they would deliver quality teaching and they commented that the observation process is not a guarantee for quality service. According to the Quality Advisor, when students say that they are learning more when the classes are observed, that is valid, because when we are observed, we give our best and prepare our best performance. It does not mean that the teacher becomes bad when observers are not there.



Graph 1.3 – Statement 3 – The main purpose of observation is to ensure quality service for students or students’ success

Graph 1.4 shows that most of the teachers think that the process of observation is useful and gives positive results and therefore should continue. However, they require revision and modification that would be supported by adequate training for observers. Furthermore, some teachers agree to carry on only if it is more qualitative and only ‘announced’. On the other side, there are teachers who do not agree that the observation process should continue. Moreover, they commented that observations did not reveal

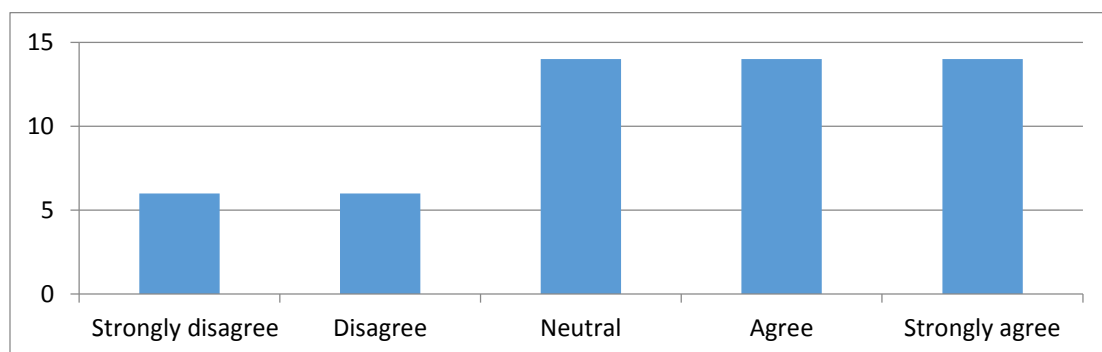
anything new regarding the quality of teaching, that they distress the teachers and focus more on fault-finding.



Graph 1.4 – Statement 4 – The observation process should continue

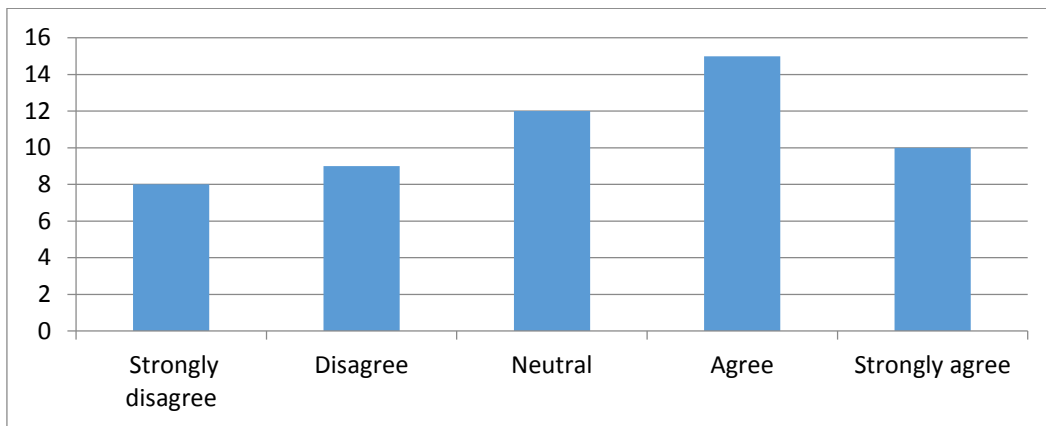
Graph 1.5 shows that most of the teachers agree that the unannounced observations are more reliable than announced since when an unannounced observation occurs, one can see if the teacher is ready for class without notification. This kind of observation induces teachers to be ready for every single class and it results in better quality teaching and learning. The main problem with observations in general is the compatibility between teachers' understanding and expectations and the aim of observers. 'A good and responsible teacher is always ready for class since he/ she is aware of the job responsibility to serve the students with quality teaching' is one of the many other comments given as part of Statement 5. Another comment regarding the unannounced observation is about the inconsistency of the reporting. Another is that it is degrading and reduces the teachers' autonomy. However, the most positive comment is that the unannounced observations are more natural and that observers can see how teachers are behaving and teaching without notification.

According to the Quality Advisor 'unannounced' observations are welcomed by all the Deans and majority of professors. However, she stated that reports for unannounced observations tended to be less well-written and therefore not so reliable for promotion and self evaluation. Also, some teachers are seen three times and others none. It could be seen as an extra level of quality control – to see if the teacher is in class or how he teaches without forewarning. It may be useful quality control for the management but it is not as valuable as the scheme that really supports the teacher. It has a different purpose.



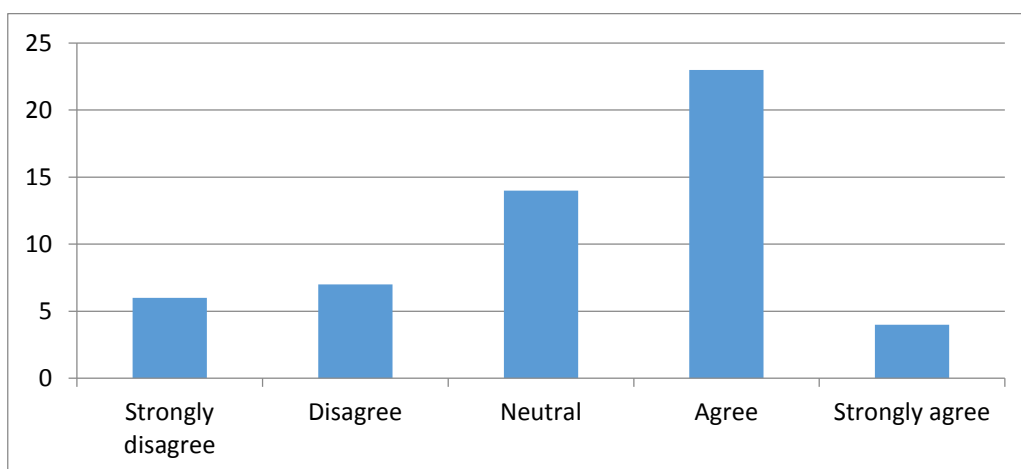
Graph 1.5 – Statement 5 – Unannounced observations are more reliable than announced observation

Graph 1.6, which is about the usefulness of unannounced observations, shows a division in opinion. A solid number of teachers think that the unannounced observations do not help with improving the quality of teaching but create a stressful atmosphere and are considered more as a tool for punishment and control. Although the number of those who think that the process of unannounced observations is useful is higher, the graph shows that the teachers are not very comfortable with unannounced observations.



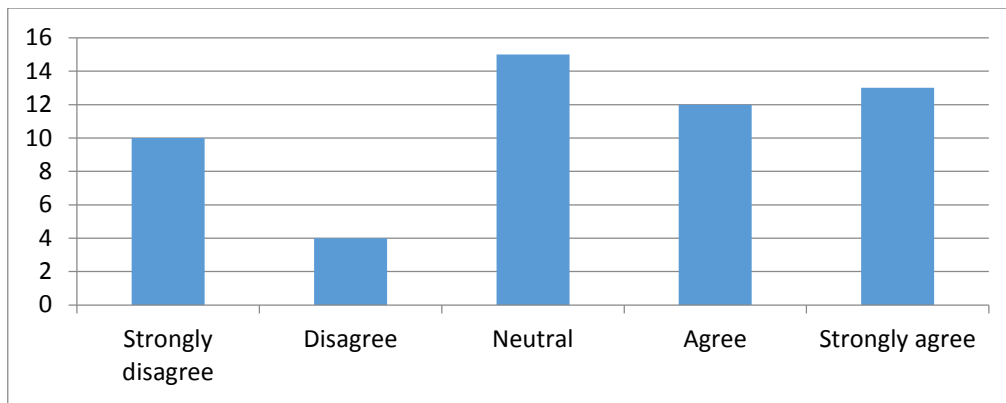
Graph 1.6 – Statement 6 – Unannounced observations are useful for improving quality

Graph 1.7 shows that a majority of teachers think that the process of observation has helped them improve their teaching, especially when the process was conducted properly and supported by detailed comments and arguments.



Graph 1.7 – Statement 7 – Observation of teaching has helped me improve my teaching

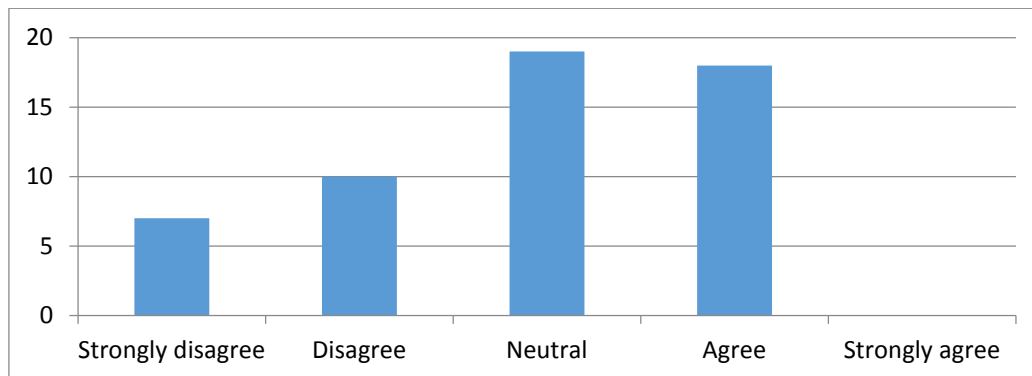
Graph 1.8 shows that a majority of staff agree on the replacement of announced observations with unannounced observations, although there is a considerable number of teachers who do not agree or are neutral. However, they have commented that the unannounced observations should not exist and the reason for that is that they consider them threatening. According to the Quality Advisor maybe it is a good idea to stop with the announced observations for a year and then see how to approach this issue. However, if another procedure is put in place then it brings other responsibilities.



Graph 1.8 – Statement 8 – Unannounced observations should replace announced observations

Graph 1.9 shows division between the number of teachers who think that the process of observation involves training opportunities and those that say there is no follow up. The majority of teachers are neutral. Some teachers indicated that there are training opportunities, but they did not use them although the process of professional development along with observations plays a positive role in improving quality teaching and learning. There were teachers who suggested specific training for specific lacks identified in the process of observation.

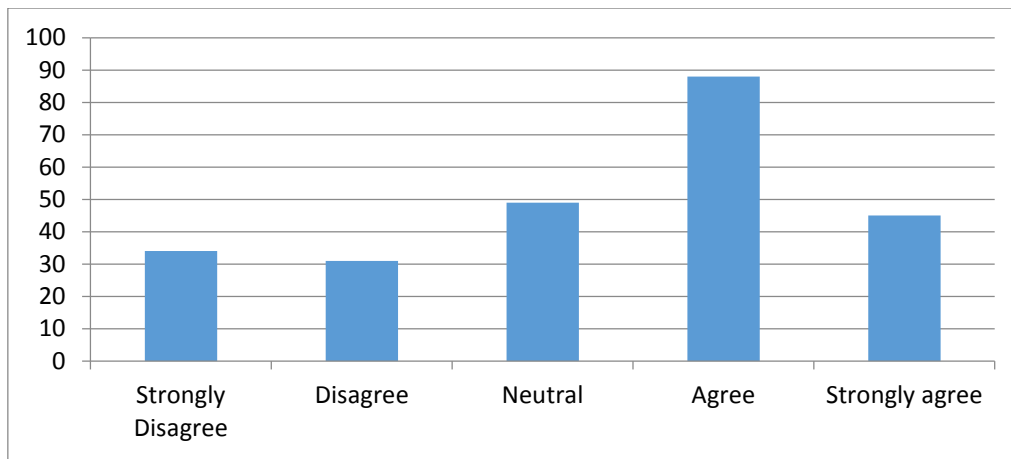
In terms of specific training identified for individual staff where significant issues were identified, the Quality Advisor said that confidentiality had been respected and in accordance with the procedure, there had been a follow up, it had worked well and had been followed up in staff evaluation in targets as well. Areas for development had also been followed up in general staff training and faculty training sessions, on methodology.



Graph 1.9 – Statement 9 – There is a useful follow up and professional development activities after teaching observations

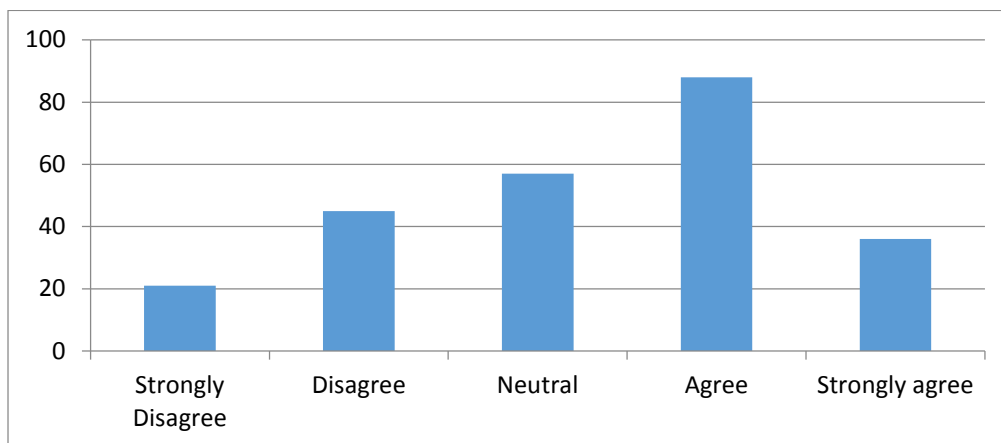
As regards the results from the student survey about teaching observations at SEEU, the following answers were given by the students:

In the statement, ‘The process of observation helps students learn more’ out of 227 students, 133 students agreed, 49 students were neutral and 65 students disagreed. The results show that students value the process of observation as a means of supporting their learning.



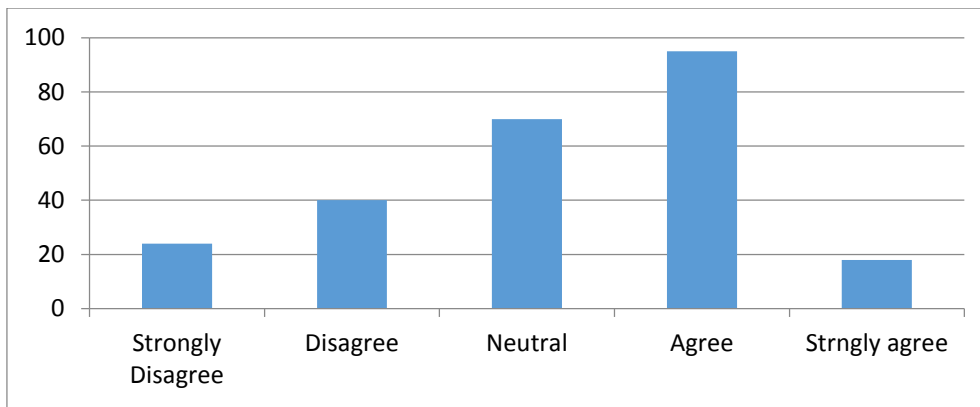
Graph 1.10 – The process of observation helps students learn more

An identical statement was given as a second question: 'Students learn more when the classes are observed'. For this question, 124 students agreed that at the time when the classes were observed the lessons were more effective and that the outcome was better than when the classes were not observed. The explanation for this was that teachers prepare more for the announced observations. 57 students were neutral and 76 students disagreed. The big number of students who either disagreed or were neutral to this question may be because their perception of the quality of classes is that they are at the same level at all times irrespective if classes were observed or not.



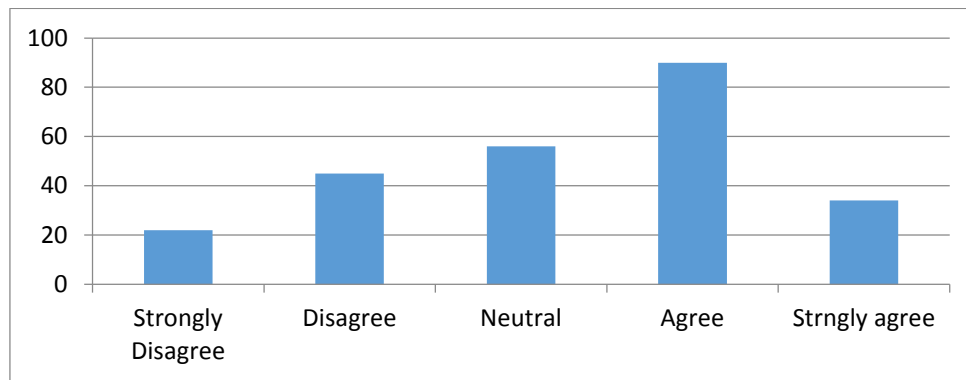
Graph 1.11 – Students learn more when the classes are observed

In the statement 'The observed classes are more qualitative than those that are not' 113 students agreed, mainly because of the announcement for the observation and the time the teachers have to prepare for this particular class especially since they know that they will be graded for their teaching in that class. However, 70 students were neutral and 64 either disagreed or strongly disagreed which indicates that students perceive consistency in the quality of teaching even in the classes that are not observed.



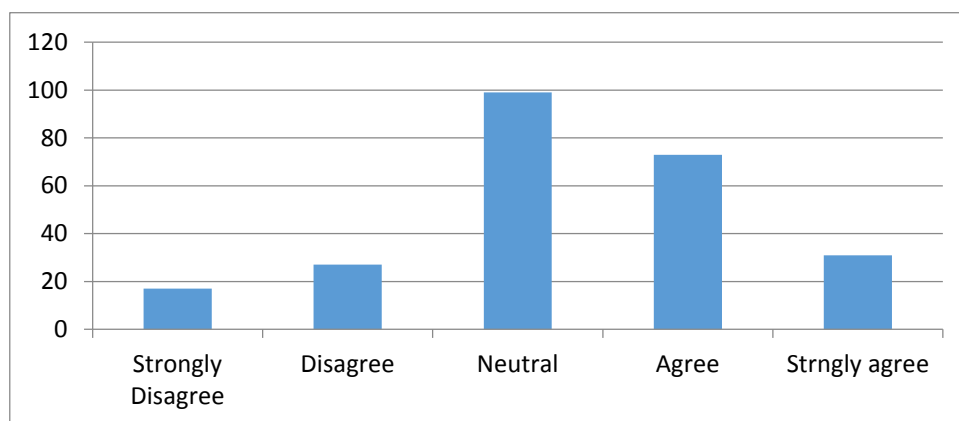
Graph 1.12 – The observed classes are more qualitative in terms of teacher preparedness than those which are not

In the statement ‘The observed classes are more interactive with more activities in class’ 124 students agreed. This is the same response rate as previous questions related to teacher preparedness. Again a considerable number of students give credit to observations as a factor that supports quality teaching.



Graph 1.13 – The observed classes are more interactive with more activities in class

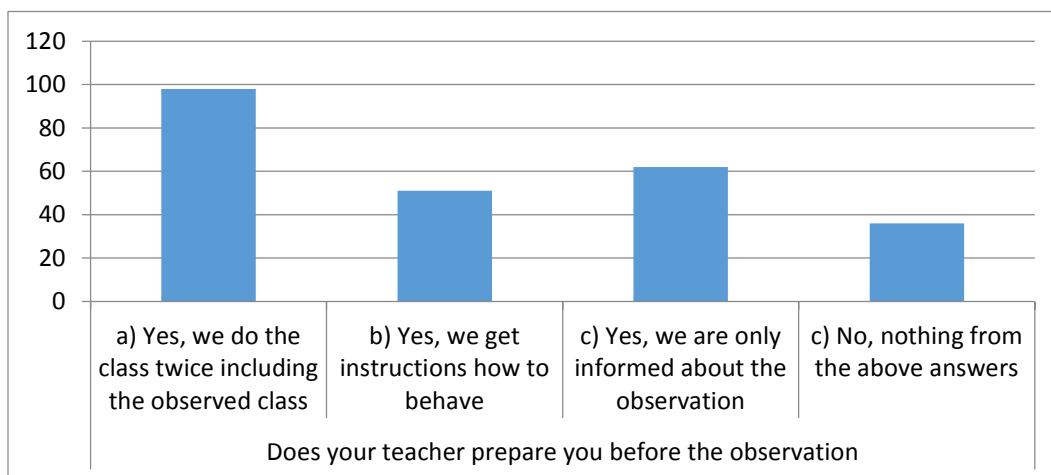
In the statement regarding the unannounced observations, shown in graph 1.14, the majority of students (99) selected neutral while 104 supported agree/strongly agree and 44 disagreed/strongly disagreed. This suggests that many students were not sure about the impact of unannounced observations.



Graph 1.14 – The recent introduction of unannounced observations will increase the quality of teaching and learning

In reply to the final question, ‘Does your teacher prepare you before the observation’, 98 students answered that they do the class twice which is an indication that some teachers are cheating, that is they are practicing the class before the official observation. According to the Quality Advisor, this kind of behaviour is unacceptable because students lose one class by repeating the same class. Based on the other

answers it can be concluded that other teachers either inform the students about the observation or give them instructions on how to behave in the observed class.



Graph 1.15 – Does your teacher prepare you before the observation?

With regard to the longitudinal data that is collected by the Quality Office at SEEU, or the analysis of the data provided by the Quality Office, it can be concluded that the data do not show any definitive trends that would allow us to conclude whether there is a progress over years, except for the progress of teaching and learning which tends to show an increase (see Annex 2). There might be many factors responsible for this, such as inconsistencies from observers, or teachers being observed in different settings or classes

But, what we can see from the graphs is that in all components most of the teachers have been graded with very good and good. This may be an indicator that teachers have been doing their job well on a continuous basis. There are excellent teachers as well, although there are cases when teachers have been graded with lower grades. That number is very low and the management have always followed up on those few cases and on many occasions have managed to improve the results.

Conclusions

Based on the research conducted it can be concluded that there are teachers who suspect the objectivity of the observations and the expertise of the observers. However, although most of them agree that there is room for improvement, they still think that the observations are indispensable for the quality of teaching and learning at SEEU and that this process is expected to continue with some modifications.

From the teacher survey, quite a number of teachers think that the observation scheme is being done to judge rather than develop teachers and enhance quality of teaching. Some teachers do not even trust in observers' qualifications and capabilities to judge and to suggest improvement. Trust is critical for a successful reflective experience and time is needed to build this (Farell, 2001).

Based on the teacher survey, teaching observations are helping teachers to improve their teaching and as a result students are learning more. The observation process should be a means for ensuring quality

student service and this needs improvement. The observation process should continue only as a developmental activity, and not judgmental and should continue to be accompanied by training and workshops. Unannounced observations are welcomed by most of the teachers and they think that these are more natural, although teachers consider that the unannounced observations feel threatening.

As for the follow up from the conducted observations, some teachers claim that there are training opportunities but that they are not utilized, whereas others say that only generic training is provided. In their opinion, there should be specific training organized, in particular training that would help staff improve the specific skills that were identified as teachers' weaker points in the process of observation. According to students, observations support better classes in terms of quality. Teachers are more prepared when classes are observed, classes are more interactive and there are more activities for the students to benefit from. However, they also think that the observations of teaching and learning are a bit unnatural since the teachers either prepare them for that particular class which is to be observed or they repeat the class twice.

The hypothesis for this paper was that there was a close correlation in the observation process between the rationale and perceptions of a majority of teachers and students which this research broadly proved with some important differences of opinion from the teachers and students. In general, the research proved that the process of observation of teaching and learning plays a positive role in maintaining quality standards at SEE University.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions that derived from this research, it is recommended that the process of observation of teaching and learning at SEEU continues with some appropriate modifications. The comments of some teachers could be considered, especially with regard to giving more emphasis to narrative descriptions of class observations and giving emphasis to the developmental aspect of observations by following up with specific faculty developmental needs. Observations should focus more on professional development rather than judgments. The difficult issue of how to evaluate content combined with appropriate methodology could also be considered. The university could strengthen the use of faculty observers in commenting on content as well as keeping the second observer with methodology experience. Involving a bigger number of qualified observers/co-observers in the process of observations might be useful.

The University should investigate ways of continuing to improve the process and value of observations of teaching and learning.

Eventually, this research can also be used by other universities who would like to introduce a similar system of quality assurance.

Bibliography

1. Gosling, D., and O'Connor, K. M. (2009), Beyond Peer Observation of Teaching, SEDA, London,
<https://www.google.com/#q=Beyond+Peer+Observation+of+Teaching+Published+by+SEDA%2C+Paper+124%2C+August+2009>
2. Gosling, D. (2002), Models of peer-observation of teaching. Learning and Teaching Support Network, Generic Centre, <http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/index>,
http://learningandteaching.vu.edu.au/teaching_practice/improve_my_teaching/evaluation_support_for_my_teaching/Resources/id200_Models_of_Peer_Observation_of_Teaching.pdf
3. Hatzipanagos S. and Lygo-Baker S. (2006), Teaching Observations: A Meeting of Minds?, International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 2006, Volume 17, Number 2, 97-105 <http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/> ISSN 1812-9129, King's College London, UK,
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/study/learningteaching/kings/support/teaching-obs-meetminds2006.pdf>
4. Loca S. & Xhaferi B. (2011), Developing standards for internal quality in higher education (Case of Albania and Macedonia), 7th Research/Expert Conference with International Participations "QUALITY 2011", Neum, B&H,
<http://www.quality.unze.ba/zbornici/QUALITY%202011/136-Q11-072.pdf>
5. McMahon T., Barrett T. & O'Neill G. (2007) 'Using observation of teaching to improve quality: finding your way through the muddle of competing conceptions, confusion of practice and mutually exclusive intentions', Teaching in Higher Education,
<http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/UCDTLD0070.pdf>
6. Millis, J. (1992), 'Conducting Effective Peer Classroom Observations', To Improve the Academy Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education DigitalCommons @ University of Nebraska – Lincoln,
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1249&context=podimproveacad>
7. Namaghi, S., A. O. (2011), Theorizing Language Teachers' Perceptions of the Rationales and Methods of Classroom Observation, US-China Foreign Language, ISSN 1539-8080 March 2011, Vol. 9, No. 3, 147-157 Shahrood University of Technology, Iran
8. Taylor, S & Tyler, J., (2012), Can teacher Evaluation improve teaching?, Education Next, an article, <http://educationnext.org/can-teacher-evaluation-improve-teaching/>
9. Williams, M. (1989), A developmental view of classroom observations.
<http://203.72.145.166/ELT/files/43-2-1.pdf>
10. Wilkerson L. and Karron G. L. (2002), Classroom Observation: The Observer as Collaborator,
<http://www.lmu.edu/Assets/Centres%20%20Institutes/Centre%20for%20Teaching%20Excellence/CO%20Wilkerson.pdf>

Annex 1

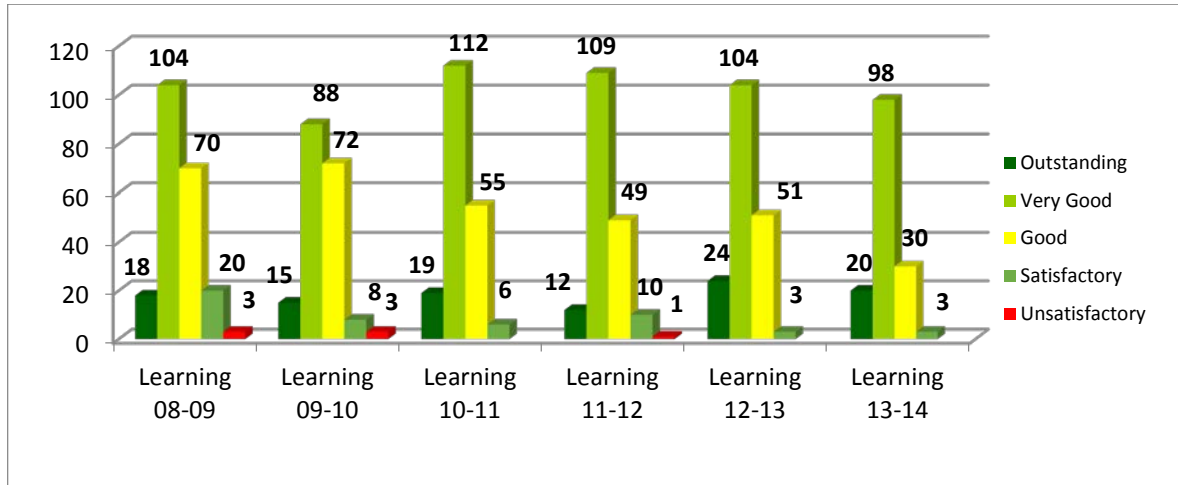
Interview with Ms. Heather Henshaw, Quality Adviser, SEEU Tetova

1. How do you value the observation process at SEEU? Does it give the expected outcomes in terms of improving teaching at university level?
2. What are the main achievements from the teaching observation process?
3. What are some issues that hinder the process of observation? The drawbacks of the process in general.
4. In your perspective is there anything that SEEU can change in terms of observation of teaching so that it can give the expected outcome?
5. Can the unannounced observations replace the announced observations in full? Comment please.
6. Are you personally satisfied with the process of observation? Some comments regarding the trend?
7. In terms of Instructional Support Services that SEEU has in its structure what is your opinion about their effectiveness? Are they taking any steps to develop the staff members' teaching based on the teaching observation reports?
8. Anything that I did not ask but it is important to be mentioned.

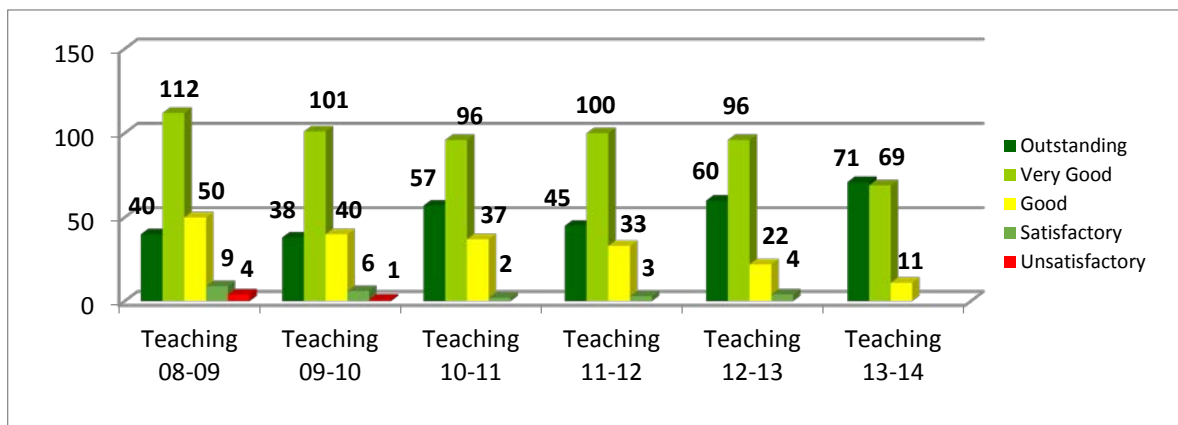
Annex 2

Comparative data from 2008-9 to 2013-14 about the process of observation of teaching and learning at SEEU Tetova – Provided by SEEU Quality Office

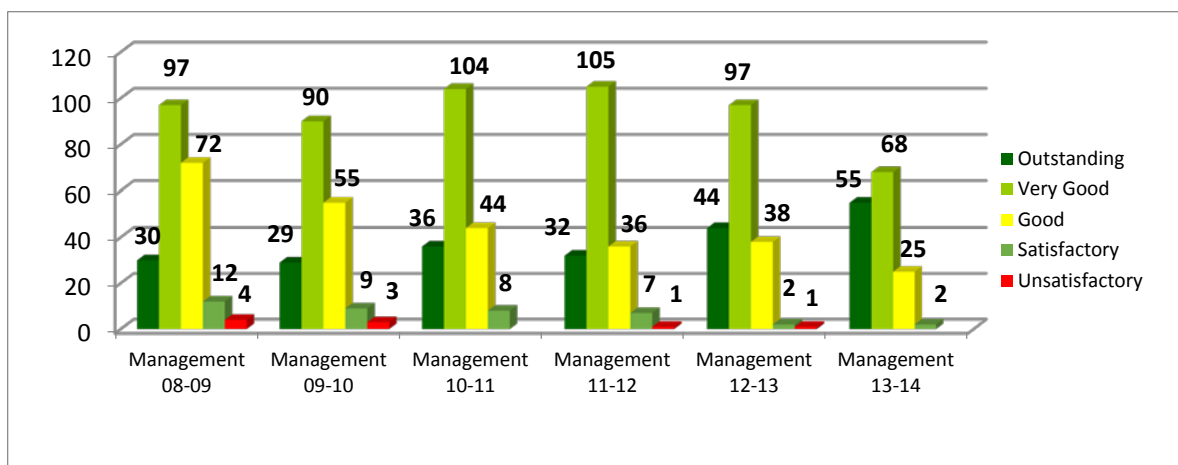
Learning Profile



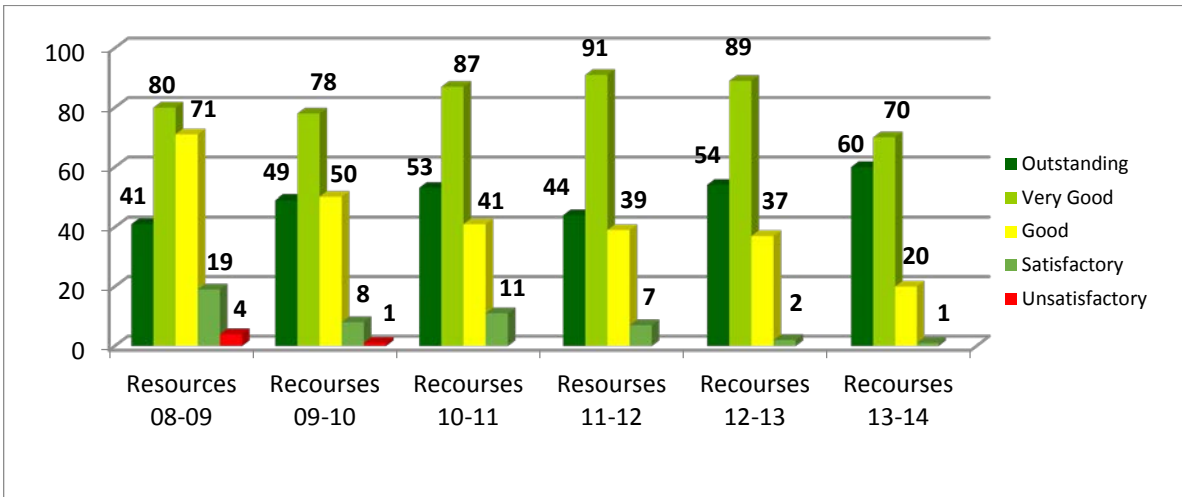
Teaching Profile



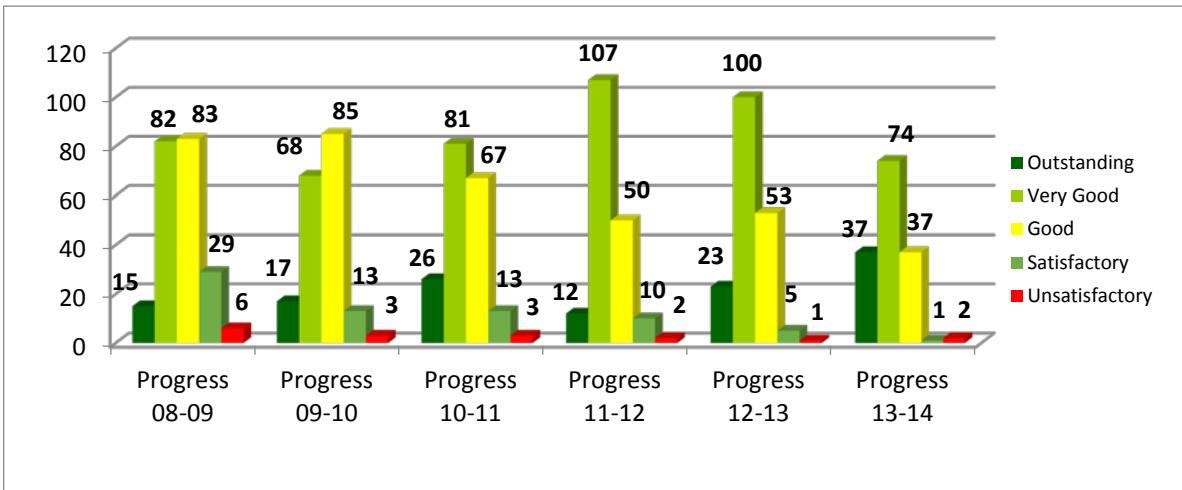
Management Profile



Resources Profile



Progress Profile



INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY FOR ENHANCED HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY

Natasha Aleksoska

n_aleksoska@yahoo.com

Abstract

The paper provides a current and systematic review of a series of good practices such as Performance Agreements, HEI internationalization counselor, language coaches and buddy mentoring implemented by different European countries at national and/or institutional level in order to stimulate student and staff mobility, thus increasing the overall quality of higher education. It also weights the transferability of the aforementioned good practices into the educational system of the Republic of Macedonia. The basis for the paper is the knowledge acquired in the course of a study visit, under the umbrella of CEDEFOP, to the Federal Ministry of Education, Research and Economy of Austria, in Vienna, in 2014, particularly the exchange of experiences on the topic of *Mobility in European Higher Education: Bologna – Mobility strategy and best practice* among the participants from 8 European countries.

Key words: *mobility, internationalization, quality of higher education, good practice, study visit.*

Introduction

Mobility reflects on the quality of higher education and it represents an instrument of personal development for the students, faculty and staff, as well as a means of acquiring current knowledge and new competences, and a higher degree of intercultural understanding and tolerance. It contributes to the increase in international employment opportunities and is an essential tool to internationalization at home and abroad. This paper, besides looking historically at the Erasmus programme as the most successful mobility programme globally, provides a current account of a series of good practices implemented by various European countries at a national or institutional level in order to stimulate mobility, primarily of students and faculty, thus directly or indirectly increasing the quality of higher education. The basis for the paper is the knowledge acquired in the course of a study visit, under the umbrella of CEDEFOP, to the Federal Ministry of Education, Research and Economy of Austria, in Vienna, in 2014, particularly the exchange of experiences on the topic of *Mobility in European Higher Education: Bologna – Mobility strategy and best practice* among the participants from 8 European countries.

The importance of mobility for the quality of European higher education: an historical perspective

Mobility is at the core of the Bologna Process and a key instrument in the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), that is, the harmonized architecture of the European higher education system which today includes 49 countries, 10,000 institutions and 36 million students. With the Sorbonne Declaration in Paris in 1998, the Ministers of Education of France, Germany, Great Britain and Italy committed to “encouraging a common frame of reference, aimed at improving external recognition and facilitating student mobility as well as employability” with the aim of “overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff,” and “promotion of the necessary European dimension in higher education”. The development of teaching and inter-institutional support became two of the six essential goals by which mobility is promoted as part of the Bologna Declaration, signed in 1999.

Recognition of the “need for a lifelong learning perspective on education” as a crucial part of a modernized European higher education is one of the conclusions of the Prague Summit in 2001.

At the conference in Berlin in 2003, it was concluded that “mobility of students and academic and administrative staff is the basis for establishing a European Higher Education Area, important for academic and cultural as well as political, social and economic spheres.”

Two years later at the ministerial meeting in Bergen in 2005 a decision was made to “intensify efforts to lift obstacles to mobility.”

At the ministerial meeting in London in May 2007, it was noted that “mobility of staff, students and graduates is one of the core elements of the Bologna Process, creating opportunities for personal growth,

developing international cooperation between individuals and institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education and research, and giving substance to the European dimension.” As is stated in the communiqué, the promotion of mobility is an essential Bologna goal and this reform is transformed into a fundamental European value.

At the next ministerial meeting in Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve in 2009, mobility was given a new impulse through the formulation of goals which the countries of the European Higher Education Area should achieve: the primary goal before 2020 is for at least 20% of all graduated students in the European Higher Education Area to have achieved study mobility (for credit or degree) or mobility for training outside of their native country. The enormous importance of the Programme for Lifelong Learning was stressed once more as a serious strategy for achieving the abovementioned goal. Consequently, the European Commission in March 2010 launched the strategy Europe 2020 as a comprehensive political initiative in order to prepare the European economy for the challenges of the upcoming decade, and in May 2010, passed the Agenda Europe 2020 with the primary priority of achieving “strong growth through developing the knowledge-based economy”.

Elena Tudzarova-Gjorgjievska (2013:11-28) stresses that each of the seven leading initiatives of the Agenda Europe 2020 is narrowly connected to higher education (for example, the initiative Innovation Union aims to improve the access to funding for research and innovation). The emphasis of Agenda Europe 2020 shifted the focus of mobility, and instead of academic and cultural gains of, moved to the forefront the increase of employment opportunities. This was in order to improve the international attractiveness of higher education in Europe and to promote mobility of students and young professionals as a means of preparing the young for the contemporary labour market.

At the ministerial meetings in Budapest and Vienna in 2010, the need was again stressed to “step up the efforts to accomplish the reforms already underway to enable students and staff to be mobile, to improve teaching and learning in higher education institutions, to enhance graduate employability, and to provide quality higher education for all”; and to increase the visibility of European education on the world map. At the ministerial conference in Bucharest in 2012, the view that “learning mobility is essential to ensure the quality of higher education, enhance students’ employability and expand cross-border collaboration within the EHEA and beyond” was again reaffirmed.

Hence, mobility is promoted not only as an instrument of personal development and progress, acquiring competences regarding learning new languages and intercultural understanding, but also as an instrument which increases the opportunities of employment in the international labour market.

One of the more innovative practices in the last decade for internationalization of students in the home country, who for various reasons cannot study abroad, is the offering of programs of study fully or partially conducted in a foreign language in the native country and the creation of a multicultural surrounding through interaction with mobile foreign students. This improves the quality of higher

education and provides economic benefit, as demonstrated in the Erasmus Impact Study 2014, “Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalization of higher education institutions” as one of the most prominent sources.

John Fielden (2007) states that higher education institutions have to apply a dual strategy for internationalization at home and internationalization abroad (Image 1) in order to improve student experience through a proactive approach. This duality is illustrated in Table 1:

Internationalisation at home	Internationalisation abroad
Internationalising the curriculum	Home students studying abroad
Foreign language study opportunities	Staff mobility, research and teaching
Mix of international students	Courses abroad jointly with partner HEIs
Engage international students in teaching and learning processes	Joint awards/accreditations
International academic staff	Research and scholarship partnership projects
Intercultural campus events	Capacity-building/technical assistance projects
Student placement with ethnic groups/organizations	International volunteering and charity work

Table 1: Internationalization at home and internationalization abroad

There is no doubt that European higher education institutions are growing progressively more aware of mobility as a main component of the strategy for internationalisation and the need to diversify international activities. They have created new tools for internationalisation in order to implement such activities efficiently with respect to finance and time invested and effectiveness with respect to achieving the desired goals. No one is under any illusions regarding the amount of work internationalisation requires, because in order to achieve success, the culture of the institution must first change. Continuing efforts are made to overcome obstacles and successfully implement mobility in practice, but different countries are achieving various results in the area of mobility.

Of relevance to the issue of increasing mobility are the tuition fees payable which might seriously impact on opportunities.

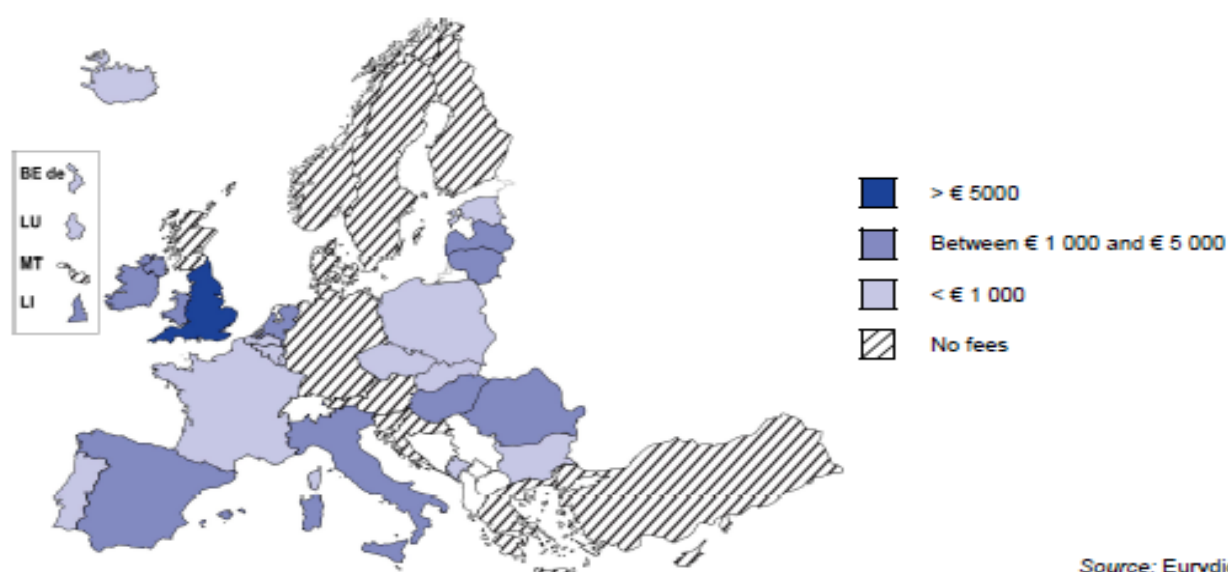


Figure 1: Eurydice National Student Fee and Support Systems in EHE Report 2014/15

According to the “Eurydice National Student Fee and Support Systems in EHE Report 2014/15” (Figure 1), there is great variation of tuition fees in publically funded higher education institutions across Europe. A significant number of systems – including all the Nordic countries – apply a 'no fee' policy for all students. France is one of the most popular countries in terms of mobility and also has very affordable tuition fees which apply equally to both domestic and international students: public universities charge only between about 183 Euro and 254 Euro per year for Bachelor's and Master's programmes respectively. Germany is another European country that has top universities but very low tuition or even no tuition fees. In contrast to other countries, this also applies for students outside of the EU/EEA. Universities are allowed to charge a maximum of 1000 Euro a year (500 Euros a semester) but in the academic year 2013/2014 most universities did not charge any tuition fee.

The other end of the scale includes nine systems where all first cycle students pay fees. Even when all students pay fees, the situation can be very diverse among countries, as there is wide variation in the amounts charged and in the way in which fees are collected. For example, the fees paid in the Czech Republic are less than 50 Euros per year and are charged as a contribution towards administrative costs. Countries with relatively high fees include Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands and Slovenia. In Slovenia, it is only part-time and international (non EU) students who pay fees. The trends (dramatically increased tuition fees) resulting from the latest reforms in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are worth noting.

Namely, Simon Sweeney, until 2013 chief Bologna expert in Great Britain's team (Sweeney, 2007:15-16) says that in Great Britain, there is a debate on the tectonic change in the functioning of higher education institutions within the past several years in consequence of the fact that the education sector became a vital part of the national economy and in 2009 alone generated over 73 billion Euros. The introduction of tuition of 10-12,000 Euros per annum (by comparison, the tuition introduced for the first time in 1998 was 1,250 Euros per annum, which was increased to 3,750 Euros per year in 2006) to offset the reduction in central financing by 80% and the introduction of entry quotas for domestic students (but not for foreign students: in some economics programs 70% of the enrolled students are from China) represents a major change in the way higher education institutions are financed and a shift of the financial burden for the studies from central authorities to students (many students will face accumulated debt of almost 62.000 Euros upon entering the labour market). Hence, higher education, seen as a common good and quest for knowledge, ideas and education seems to have been replaced by the commercial approach where students are clients and the institutions are redirecting themselves towards so called marketisation of higher education. The situation here is unique, because most countries of the EU, as shown above, have free public higher education or lesser yearly tuition. It remains to be seen what effect the new financing system will have in the United Kingdom, but it will certainly to some extent affect the mobility of students and staff.

Successful international mobility plays a crucial role in the process of assuring quality of higher education, the expansion of the cross-border cooperation within the European Higher Education Area, but also beyond it, as well as the increase of student employability in circumstances in which 6 million young people within the EU are unemployed (in some countries this number is over 50%). Also, according to Algirdas Valilulis (2013:204), improving the image of the country through improving the education system, including study conditions, student standards and migration policies, is of essential importance in order to gain the attention of international higher education partners and potential international students. The existence of a national strategy with clearly defined national goals, priority activities for internationalisation of higher education and national financing, is an important condition to support higher education institutions in their efforts in international cooperation and the increase of competitiveness, especially considering the newest European initiatives focusing increasingly on regions outside the EU.

The Erasmus Programme as a pillar of mobility

The degree of mobility is the largest in those European countries in which the Erasmus programme is developed and in which there are parallel bilateral mobility programmes. Erasmus is the most successful programme for student exchange in the world, with over 250,000 mobile students per year, or a total of 1,5 million study stays outside of the native country, at 4,400 higher education institutions and 33,785 companies accepting 35,785 students on work placement. The above data are cited in the Macedonian version of the brochure titled “European Union Erasmus+ Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport 2014-2020” (2014:5-15). Since 2007, the Erasmus programme has been included in the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission as a moving force of modernization of higher education in Europe.

According to the latest statistical data about Erasmus provided by the European Commission³ in July 2014, almost 268,143 students studied or practiced abroad during the academic year 2012/2013, of which 67% stayed for an average of 6 months during their undergraduate studies, 29% during their postgraduate studies, 3% during a short study cycle and 1% during their doctoral studies. Out of all students benefiting from an Erasmus stay abroad, 61% were women. Simultaneously, 52,624 teaching and administrative staff taught or trained abroad with the Erasmus programme. Great Britain accepts almost twice as many Erasmus students (27,182) than it sends abroad (14,572). Spain, France and Germany send the most students abroad through Erasmus and they are simultaneously the most popular destinations for students traveling with the Erasmus programme (Figure 2):

³ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-476_en.htm

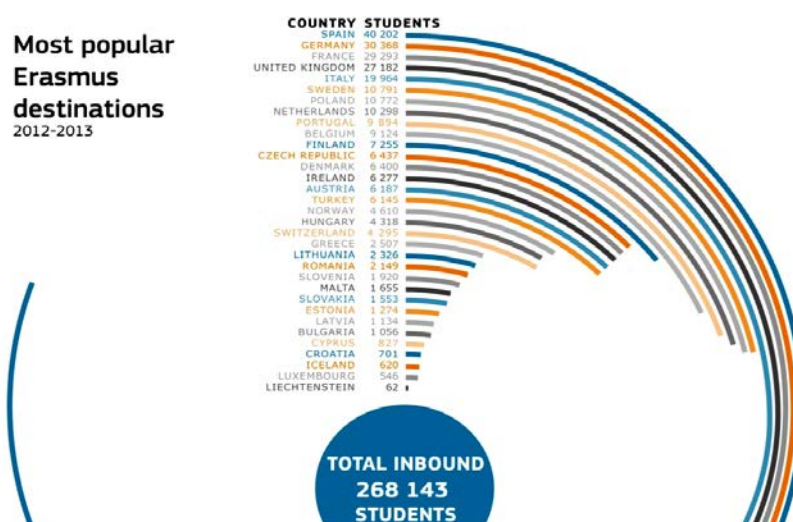


Figure 2: The most popular Erasmus destinations for students in 2012/2013

(Source: European Commission, July 2014)

In addition, the OECD Report 'Education at a Glance 2011' reveals that what affects the choice of destination is primarily the language of teaching (countries where a widely-spoken language is used, such as English, French, German, Spanish and Russian are the major destinations for foreign students, both in relative and in absolute terms), the quality of the programme, the tuition, living expenses, visas and immigration policies, the academic reputation of certain institutions, and the recognition of foreign qualifications.

With the launch of Erasmus + in 2014 with a planned budget of 14, 7 billion Euros for a period of seven years, it is expected that the benefits of mobility and contribution to quality will increase even more at European higher education institutions. It is envisaged that increased mobility via the financing of joint projects will contribute to the modernization of higher education institutions and companies, promote virtual campuses, reduce or eliminate barriers to mobility, stimulate innovation in higher education and increase social inclusion⁴. Although some countries such as the Netherlands and Austria have already reached the projected goal of at least 20% of all graduated students having stayed or trained abroad and 40% of people aged between 30-34 to have finished tertiary education, in most countries student mobility is still under 5%. Erasmus+ is designed as a platform which should increase the global visibility of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), strengthen the connections to non-European institutions and multiply global multilateral partnerships. The battle fought among countries and leading European higher education institutions to win over a bigger segment of international mobility is fully understandable.

⁴ Erasmus + Programme of the European Union for education, training, youth and sports 2014-2020, brochure published by the National Agency for European education programmes and mobility, Skopje, 2014, p. 5-7

Study visit for mobility in European higher education: good practices

As part of the lifelong learning programme coordinated on a European level by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) for the European Commission, in April 2014, I visited the Federal Ministry of Education, Research and Economy of Austria. Along with representatives from the Netherlands, France, Great Britain, Italy, Portugal, Turkey and Poland, I participated in discussions organized around the topic: “Mobility in European Higher Education: Bologna - Mobility Strategy and Best Practice”. During this visit, within the work sessions, we were able to analyze the educational policies and practices in selected European countries and to establish contacts for further deeper cooperation and exchange of positive experiences.

The study visit had two primary goals:

- 1) Via direct contact with prominent Austrian education experts (for questions pertaining to languages, the law, financing, marketing and housing) to introduce participants from various European countries to the conditions in Austrian higher education, with a special focus on mobility. This was supplemented with field visits to relevant agencies, such as the Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research (OeAD) and visits to leading Austrian higher education institutions, such as the University of Economy and Business, the prestigious University of Music and Arts (which has a small degree of mobility abroad since 60% of its students and faculty are foreign) and the University of Natural Sciences BAKU which is one of the best in the world in its area.
- 2) Presentation of education systems and mobility strategies of participating countries and their comparison in open discussions according to a series of criteria, in order to detect advantages and weaknesses at a national and/or institutional level and to accordingly offer solutions and give recommendations.

Based on a series of presentations, documents and reports, field visits and comprehensive discussions, I can identify and summarize the following current practices implemented by various European countries which have the potential to improve the climate of student mobility (credit or in pursuit of educational degree) and staff mobility (of faculty and administrative staff) which aims to have a direct positive effect on the improvement of the quality of higher education:

1. Austria and the Netherlands already have an established practice of Performance Agreements, reached through a process of negotiations, between the Ministry of Education and Science and individual higher education institutions, with clearly defined goals to be achieved with regards to education results, the scientific and expert field and, particularly, the mobility of students, faculty and staff within 3 years. This directly affects the budget and other support by the central authorities. As an illustration, the Breda University, which is a leader in higher education in the

Netherlands, has taken the responsibility in the Performance Agreement 2012-2015 that by December 31, 2015, up to 60% of all students will have spent at least one semester, or gained 30 credits abroad through a student mobility programme, joint diploma programme, work placement or graduation project. In case this goal is not reached, the budget of the higher education institution will be reduced by 7% per annum, or 21% for a period of 3 years, through regular yearly monitoring. What is impressive is the fact that with the excellent strategy for mobility abroad and for internationalization at home, combined with the professionalism of management and faculty, as well as that of the internationalization consultants, the Breda University has already reached that goal.

2. The Netherlands, France, Great Britain and others hire internationalisation consultants, who prepare an international strategy for the higher education institution and monitor its realization, evaluate the effect of potential partners on the image of the institution before proposing a cooperation agreement, evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing cooperation agreements, keep track of the competition and policies developing at an international and at a national level and recommend taking advantage of possibilities and overcoming obstacles.
3. A positive practice which is an important condition not only for mobility but for high-quality mobility of students (and faculty and staff) is the opening of an office of a Students' Ombudsman which, in the case of Austria (which is experiencing brain gain, especially in the third cycle of study), functions within the office of the Public Ombudsman, and a process has begun to open offices of the Students' Ombudsman in all higher education institutions in Austria⁵. This is an exceptionally important condition for high-quality mobility outside and successful internationalization at home, because it improves the access of students (domestic and foreign) to information, it simplifies the access to their rights and helps solve issues such as immigration problems in obtaining a visa and stay permits, housing arrangements, problems with diploma recognition and grade equivalence.
4. In order to improve the quality of internationalisation at home and manage possible issues of international students with regards to recognition of educational qualifications, beside standard ECTS structures implemented at an institutional level, a positive practice in the Netherlands is the implementation of a Code of Conduct which has been officially accepted by all higher education institutions. This guarantees the rights of international students coming through mobility programmes (including the recognition of diplomas and language competences). Each

⁵ In the RM, a Students' Ombudsman Office was opened in 2009 at the "SS Cyril and Methodius University". Further information: http://spukm.org.mk/mk/studentski_pravobranitel

institution is mandated to sign officially the Code of Conduct individually with each mobile student in order for a visa to be issued.⁶

5. Where there is a high level of internationalisation at home, and in order to minimize problems created by cultural differences, a positive practice in the Netherlands is the introduction of intercultural tests to determine the Intercultural Development Index (IDI) for all employees at the beginning of the academic year, intercultural communication training throughout the year and a second testing to determine the Intercultural Development Index (IDI) at the end of the year, when it forms a part of the annual employee evaluation.
6. In order to ease access to information and to raise the quality of higher education through promoting competition, some countries are creating a centralised national database for higher education and international mobility, which contains all information about the education system, higher education institutions, study programmes, scholarship opportunities, grants, housing, and so on. The database can be searched through a whole array of specific criteria. The national database is continuously updated by higher education institutions themselves, and they are responsible for its content. They are allowed to link to the database from their own website: for example, for Austria, it is the website www.International-Cooperations.at, www.grants.at, for France: www.campusfrance.org/en, for the Netherlands: www.studyinholland.nl, www.nuffic.nl, for Poland: www.gopoland.pl, www.granty-na-badania.com, for Turkey: www.turkiyeburslari.gov.tr/index.php/en/, and for Italy: www.miur.it.
7. Of exceptional value in the motivation of faculty and staff to undertake mobility for a longer period of time is the existence of a system of guaranteed pension insurance for the period of mobility, which will prevent the stay from having a negative impact on the security of employees regarding the right to, and value of their pension. Such a system has been firmly established in France, applies to all mobile faculty and staff and so far has not been raised as a disputable issue.
8. Language instructors for faculty, who attend classes conducted in a foreign language and assist the teacher who has basic, but not advanced knowledge of the foreign language, is a practice established in Austria and Portugal. This enables the teacher to improve the lessons at hand and to be able to participate more actively in the exchange, but also to improve his or her presentation abilities in the foreign language, which is of value for scientific work, conference participation or projects.
9. With a high degree of internationalisation at home, beside the standard system of 'mobility buddies' (referring to a network of local students assisting international students in their cultural,

⁶Further information about the Behaviour Codex implemented in the Netherlands: <http://www.internationalstudy.nl/en/page/code-of-conduct-international-student-in-dutch-higher-education>

academic and linguistic integration in the host country), some higher education institutions have found creative new solutions, such as the University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE-IUL) from Portugal, which established a Programme for Buddy Mentorship as a subject integrated in the curriculum. This enables domestic students who reach the clearly defined goals to attain a maximum of 6 ECTS credits. This good practice can significantly ease the integration of international students in the academic environment, while also motivating and involving local students in a positive fashion and building cultural tolerance.

10. Another example of good practice from the University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE-IUL) from Portugal is the inclusion of both non-formal and formal education in the diploma supplement, which positively reflects on mobility and which is an added value to the learning experience.

Conclusion

All abovementioned good practices can, to a smaller or greater degree, be implemented in the higher education system of the Republic of Macedonia or by individual higher education institutions in the country. This would stimulate the mobility of students and faculty⁷ (for a minimum of one semester), and enable them to acquire new knowledge and new teaching ideas, gain comparative experiences, inspire other colleagues, offer opportunities to improve language skills, acquire an invaluable cultural capital, network, and use physical distance to enhance critical thinking, self-reliance and maturity. Also, through a well-defined mobility strategy, it would attract high-quality foreign students which supports internationalisation at home and increases the renown of the institution. In both cases, only high quality voluntary mobility can increase the quality of higher education.

I hope this brief overview will inspire many students and colleagues to get acquainted with mobility opportunities available in the Republic of Macedonia, because, in the words of Ms. Regina Aichner, mobility expert at the Austrian Bologna Service Point, “only internationally educated faculty and staff can fully understand the advantages and added value of internationalization.”

⁷According to the *UNESCO Report 2012*, out of the 56.000 students a still small percentage are mobile per year: 5.166 students from the RM went on a study stay in Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Austria, Turkey, Slovenia and the USA, and 1.431 student came to study in RM from Serbia, Albania, Bulgaria and Turkey. Regarding faculty mobility, according to the data from the National Agency for European Programmes and Mobility of the RM, only through the Erasmus Programme, in the academic 2012/2013 year 15 faculty staff went abroad, as many as did in 2013/2014, which means faculty mobility is still very low.

Bibliography

1. Еразмус+ Програма на Европската Унија за образование, обука, млади и спорт 2014-2020, Национална агенција за европски образовни програми и мобилност, 2014, стр. 5-15
2. Туцарова-Ѓорѓиевска, Е (2013) Високото образование во 21 век, Зеница, Скопје, стр. 11-28 <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=43>
3. Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalization of higher education institutions, Erasmus Impact Study 2014
4. European Commission IP/14/821 10/07/2014, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-821_en.htm
5. Eurydice National Student Fee and Support Systems in EHE Report 2014/15, Eurydice, 2014
6. European Higher Education Area in 2012, Bologna Process implementation Report, pp. 151-173
7. Fielden, J. (2007) Global Horizons for UK Universities. London: The Council for Industry and Higher Education.
8. Mobility in European higher education: Bologna-mobility strategy and best practice”, Study visit group Report, Vienna, CEDEFOP, 2014
9. OECD Report 2011, Education at a glance <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/48631582.pdf>, pp. 321-324
10. Sweeney, C. (2012) Going Mobile: Internationalisation, mobility and the European Higher Education Area , The Higher Education Academy, York (UK)
11. Valiulis, Algirdas V. (2013) Students and academic staff international mobility – a supplementary tool for better learning, World transactions on Engineering and Technology education, Vol. 11, N° 3, pp. 204-206

PREPARATION OF SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY GRADUATES FOR THE JOB MARKET IN MACEDONIA

Burbuqe Kaprolli Hamzai

b.kaprolli@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract

Today's job market is constantly changing and evolving around the world, making it difficult for students to follow trends in employment. Given the importance of this highly competitive job market and what students face from university graduation to career, the aim of this paper is to assess the gaps between educational preparation and employment. The intention of the research is to improve professional development and, by doing so, help increase the students' ability to compete in the market.

Keywords: *market, employment, career, preparation.*

Introduction

This paper seeks to assess the programmes that are offered at South East European University. The University is a regional leader in higher education in the South Balkans and, as such, provides a means of assessing the job market preparation provided by universities throughout the region. The paper seeks first to determine whether or not the programmes are compatible with what the job market is looking for in graduates. It then proposes to assess the role of the University Career Centre, which is the official body within the University tasked with the provision of job search advice and internship assistance. The paper hopes to assess whether or not the Career Centre helps the students with the necessary support to develop the techniques needed to obtain employment. In a third direction, the paper assesses the actual efforts made by students in seeking work, specifically considering whether they work sufficiently at the task of obtaining a job, and whether or not they know what employers really want. Finally, the paper will assess the impressions of local employers, considering what gaps in skills they face with new employees, and how company involvement in the design of future curricula might increase the quality of learning and post-graduation employability.

Research Methodology

This paper proposes four hypotheses:

- If a Career Centre, university representatives (with their curricula) and employers continuously cooperate with students, then students will be more prepared for today's job market.
- SEEU's current curricula do not follow the job market trends.
- SEEU students are not prepared for the job market.
- Company representatives in Macedonia cannot find compatible graduates for employment.

This paper uses several assessment mechanisms. The primary methodologies used are:

- *The Quantitative method:* Questionnaires for graduated students of all five faculties at SEEU: Business and Economics; Public Administration and Political Sciences; Languages, Cultures and Communications; Contemporary Sciences and Technologies and Law.
- *The Qualitative method:* Interviews with employers in Macedonia.

After the completion of this work, we expect that the results obtained will increase the preparation of SEEU graduates for the job market, improve students' selection of their courses and the proper cooperation among university representatives, company representatives and graduates for the future design of university curricula.

Literature Review

According to Robert Farrington, today's employers are looking for well skilled graduates with effective communicational skills (Farrington, 2014). This seems indisputable. There is a strong argument that today's employers ask of new employees that they arrive in employment with well-developed communication skills which will help them in the working environment. Moreover, an integral part of most new work systems is a greater commitment to training and skill development, both before and during employment. Note, however, that this training will produce positive returns only if the trained workers are then permitted to employ their skills (Raymond, 1997).

“The strategy of the Excellence Movement focuses on the attempt to create permanent innovation and enterprise in organizations that were no longer defined by bureaucratic rules and regulations and where leaders replaced managers, and employees became empowered to meet the needs of increasingly sophisticated customers” (Grieviers, 2003). There are theoreticians that are looking for newly-developed managers and not bureaucrats. In this perspective, managers themselves should be well-prepared and responsive to the existing job market, and not just asking this innovation and preparation of the graduates seeking employment. This cooperative attitude will help both parties create a good working environment. Companies create their strategies and structures, develop skills, train people and manage their institutional style. In the experience of the author (the Director of the SEEU Career Centre), there are companies in Macedonia and in the broader region who are trying to follow this trend. The University, and the Career Centre, is trying to find their needs and offer well-prepared graduates for the job market. As mentioned above, the production process in modern enterprises is often a collaborative effort requiring teamwork. Whatever our employment, as we work with colleagues to achieve common goals and contribute jointly to problem-solving, we develop a social bond and a sense of belonging that are important for our emotional health (Hoon, 2000). Alongside strategic planning and well-trained people, companies also seek to establish a good and positive working environment. By this, they will promote success from their well-prepared staff and have the right to expect results.

Analyses of graduate perspectives on the job market

For the purposes of this research, a questionnaire was distributed to all graduates of South East European University (with campuses located in both Tetovo and Skopje). As mentioned above, the questionnaire was submitted to graduates of all five Faculties of the University: Business and Economics; Public Administration and Political Sciences; Languages, Cultures and Communications; Contemporary Sciences and Technologies and Law. No distinction was made in relation to ethnic identity. The questionnaire was submitted to Albanians, Macedonians and students from other ethnic groups who graduated from these Faculties. The group mail was distributed with Google document tools and analyses were processed by Excel.

Qualitative method

Interviews were conducted with companies from Macedonia, in both the public and private sectors: NGOs, the Government, schools, banks and service providers. According to their self-definition, they were ethnic Albanians, Macedonians and other groups; again, no distinction was made in selecting those interviewed.

The questionnaire consisted of questions distributed in three parts, as follows: the first part contained general questions relating to gender, ethnicity and Faculty; the second part asked students to answer questions regarding their experiences (using a Likert scale); and the third part consisted of open-ended questions that offered students the opportunity to report their experiences freely.

Results

Among the study programmes offered at SEEU there are 90 study programmes offered in three cycles of studies (i.e. undergraduate through doctorate). These programmes attempt to develop subjects through both theoretical knowledge and understanding, and the development of practical skills and their application. Programmes are offered in three languages: Albanian, Macedonian and English. All programmes also require student preparation in IT skills and language skills. Most of the subjects demand both individual and group learning skills which companies in Macedonia more and more commonly require of university graduates. So how do these programmes match the needs of employers in the country and the region? Let us assess some data.

Faculty	BE	CST	Environment	Max V.S.	LCC	LAW	PAPS
Undergraduate	4	4	0	0	4	2	3
Master	8	7	2	2	8	6	8
Doctoral	2	1	1	0	3	3	2

Table 1: Study programmes offered by each faculty and cycle of studies at SEEU.

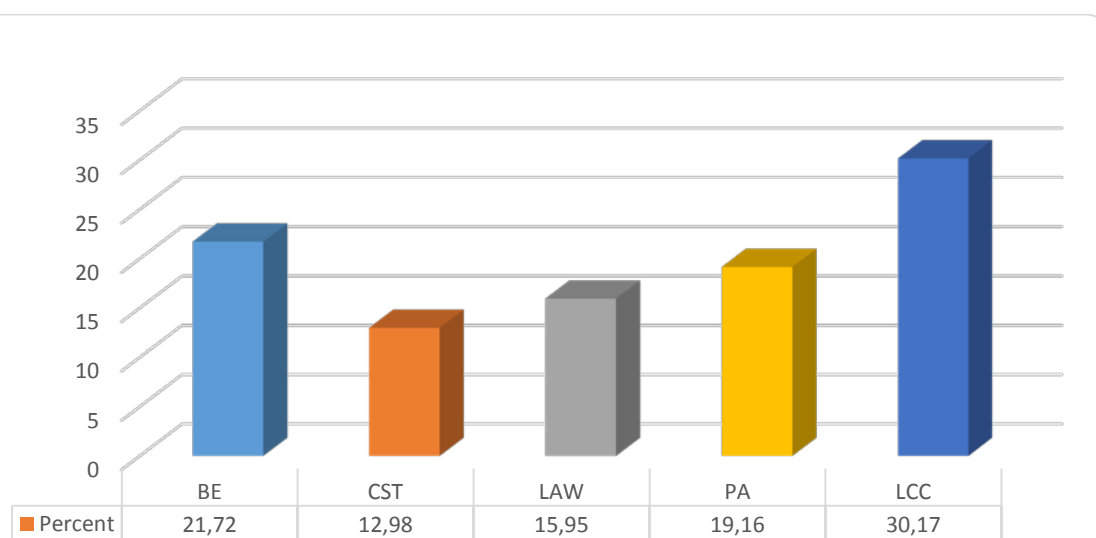


Figure1: SEEU Career Center Job Announcements from Newspapers (6 months period of time)

Figure 1 shows the number of announcements that the Career Centre gathered from daily newspapers for a period of six months. In the table it may be seen that the highest percentage of announcements apply to the Language, Cultures and Communications faculty, and the lowest to Contemporary Sciences and Technologies. The Career Centre has data for all announcements that we send to our graduates either from newspaper, online web pages or direct contacts from companies.

Faculty	BE	PAPS	LAW	LCC	CST
Total	18	12	14	19	21
Percent	21%	14%	17%	23%	25%

Table 2: Questionnaire fulfillment by faculty

For this research, the largest number of students who answered the questionnaire are the students of Contemporary Sciences and Technologies with a rate of 25% followed by Languages, Cultures and Communications Faculty with a total rate of 23%. The Faculty with the lowest completion rate was Public Administration and Political Sciences, with a total of 14%.

Gender	Male	Female
Total	43	41
Percent	51%	49%

Table 3: Questionnaire fulfillment by gender

The total participation of males in this survey was 51 %, while female participation was 49 % (table 3). This is broadly in line with enrolment and graduation percentages of gender participation in the university as well.

Ethnicity	Albanian	Macedonian	Turkish	Other
Total	57	16	6	5
Percent	68%	19%	7%	6%

Table 4: Questionnaire fulfillment by ethnicity

Based on the ethnic identification of the respondents, the overall participation of Albanians in the analysis is 68 %; Macedonians 19%; Turkish 7% and other ethnicities 6 % (table 4). This ratio does not reflect the ratio of ethnicities in the university (about 70% Albanian and 20% Macedonian/other) but occurred because the questionnaire was distributed to all graduates. The data on ethnic identity were gathered solely for purposes of meta-analysis of the data, and not to separate the respondents by ethnicity.

Employment status	Full time	Part time	Self employed	Internship	Other
Percent	75%	15%	8%	1%	1%

Table 5: Questionnaire fulfillment by employment status

Table 5 shows the employment status of graduates who fulfilled the questionnaire. According to this table, 75% of them are employed full-time, 15% part time, and the lowest percent of them are doing their internship (or other), with a total ratio of 1%.

	Before graduation	1-3 months after	4-7 months after	7-12 months after	Other
Percent	19%	19%	24%	25%	13%

Table 6: How long did it take to find a job after graduation?

Table 6 shows the time it took for graduates to find employment after graduating. We note that a full 19% are employed before graduation, 42% are employed in the first 7 months after graduation, 25% find

employment 7-12 months after graduation, and the remaining 13% of them answered other options; it is thus clear that the majority find work and start work during the middle of the calendar year after they finish their university.

	Internet	Newspaper	Political Parties	Friends	Career Centre	Other
Percent	18%	14%	8%	29%	14%	17%

Table 7: Where did you find a job position?

Based on the responses of students regarding where they learned about their current job position, 29% have answered that they learned from their friends, and about 18% from the Internet. The Career Centre ties with newspapers as a source of job information and, indeed, may have passed on the advertisements from the newspapers to the graduates, as part of the Career Centre service; political parties continue to account for approximately 8% of employment.

Faculty	Career Centre	Your faculty	Contact with companies	Undergraduate programs	Other
Percent	27%	23%	18%	6%	26%

Table 8: Which are the factors that helped you for your employment?

Table 8 shows the factors that assisted graduates in finding employment. According to the results, the highest level of them answered that the Career Centre helped them (27%). The lowest percentage of them answered that the undergraduate programme helped them a lot to find employment.

How much did your undergraduate faculty program help you in the labor market?

Not at all	9	11%
Very little	15	18%
Enough	40	48%
A lot	20	24%

One of the questions that measures SEEU graduate satisfaction and the one that will help us to improve in the future was the question related to study programmes. As can be seen, 24% of them answered that the study programme helped them a lot for the job market and 11% of them claim not at all. Almost half of the graduates who answered the questionnaire think that the study programme offered at the university is compatible with what the job market is asking from them now.

Were the subjects you attended during the study period adequate for the job you are working in now?

Yes	61	73%
No	22	26%
Other	1	1%

In the context of the adequacy of the study programme to the requirements of the job market, 73% of the graduates answered yes, and the rest no. It is interesting to mention that there are people who have graduated in one programme who are required to do something completely different from what they learned in the programme from which they graduated. Those who answered no are often those graduates.

Did you attend additional courses after your employment for professional development?

Yes	23	27%
No	61	73%

The Career Centre often faces company representatives who desire graduates with additional courses and advanced knowledge beyond the courses offered at the University. In this context, 73% of the respondents answered that they had not taken additional training, and the rest stated that they had. From the perspective of the Career Centre, it appears to be a growing trend that companies ask potential candidates for employment that they take additional courses before or after hiring, in order to develop additional skills or capacities.

Were you capable of applying for a job (writing a CV, letter of motivation, interview techniques)?

Enough	69	82%
Not at all	10	12%
Other	5	6%

Usually there are people who face difficulties when they apply for a job position, particularly with such basic employment skills as writing a C.V., composing motivation letters, strengthening interviewing techniques and similar abilities. For this reason, the research asked our graduates if they possessed such techniques before employment. As may be seen, the highest rate of them answered enough, 82%, and the rest had difficulties with it. This is an encouraging percentage of success, yet it does indicate that roughly 20% of graduates still struggle with basic job seeking skills.

To generate positive recommendations from this research, graduates were also asked to submit their opinions on what courses should be offered at the University in the future, and those that they took after their graduation are mention below. Their answers were (in no specific order): Jurisdiction; Telecommunications; SQLServer; CISCO; Photography; Design; Management Systems; Eurocontrol; PR/Marketing; JAVA; Pedagogy; MVC4 design; Microsoft/Implementation and Maintenance Microsoft Server 2012; Enterprise Edition Administration EMC Information Management v2.0 Cisco Networking Academy; HTML; Database; Seminars by the British Council; Implementation of IT in the classroom and Journalism.

Another indicator that measures SEEU graduate preparation for the job market is the obligatory element of the curricula, required of all students, for language skills and computer abilities. Regarding language preparation, our research shows that 93% of the graduates answered that they have adequate English knowledge for the job they are working on. This is a significant validation of the University's commitment to multiple language instruction and the flexible use of languages. Of course, the responses might also mean that the work they are doing does not require any advanced English knowledge; nonetheless, only 7% felt that they were under-prepared for the level of English their work requires. Additionally, in regard to computer skills, 98% of SEEU graduates mentioned that they have enough knowledge of computer programmes for the job they are working on. Again, this may mean that their daily tasks require little or no use of computers; yet it is significant to note that only 2% feel under-prepared for the computer demands placed upon them by their employment. Regarding teamwork and

collaborative skills, 92% of them stated that they had the ability to work in groups. Finally, the graduates were asked their opinion on their employers' satisfaction with their professional development: 96% stated that they themselves felt that the company in which they currently work was satisfied.

To generate further positive recommendations from this research, I asked also for suggestions about how the curricula should be changed in the future. The difference between this request and that above is that the previous question dealt with suggestions for individual courses; this seeks more general recommendations for curriculum change. According to their answers, the graduates suggest: adding more courses with new programmes for computer sciences; providing more practical (or in-company) work; combining a part-time job to parallel studies; adding pedagogical studies; providing courses for law licenses; instruction on developing and preparing a syllabus; more subjects dealing specifically with linguistics; creating specific practical (or in situ) courses for the Law Faculty; and generally bringing companies, students, and the University into closer collaboration.

Analyzing the student data illustrated several variables in terms of curricula across faculties which, broadly seen, suggest that the focus of new curricula (or revised curricula) should be more practically-orientated. It may be advantageous to consider this, perhaps with additional courses with certificates or licenses, and deeper language and computer knowledge.

Analysis of Company Representatives' perspectives on the preparation of SEEU graduates for the job market

	Less than 10 graduates	10-20 graduates	More than 20 graduates
Total	24	8	0
Percent	75%	25%	0%

Table 9: How many SEEU students work or have worked for you?

As can be seen from table 9, 75% of company representatives answered that they had fewer than 10 SEEU graduates working for their company.

SEEU Students	YES	NO
Total	31	1
Percent	97%	3%

Table 10: Do you have graduates of SEEU in your company currently?

Table 10 shows the percentage of company representatives who currently have SEEU graduates working for their company. As can be seen, 97% of them answered yes.

	State institution	NGO	Education	Service	Trade	Bank	Other
Percent	9%	16%	0%	28%	22%	13%	13%

Table 11: Field of company's operation

Table 11 shows the company field of operation to those who were interviewed for this paper. As can be seen, the highest rate (28%) was from services, continuing with trade, at 22%. The lowest percentage was from education. This percentage does not reflect the percentage of company fields of operation with whom we work but just the number of companies who were willing to be interviewed.

	Micro company (0-9)	Small company (10-49)	Medium company (50-249)	Big company (above 250)
Percent	38%	28%	28%	6%

Table 12: Company size

As for the size of the company answered on the interview, most of them identified as being a micro company (0-9 employed) (38%), and the lowest identified as being a big company (above 250 employed) (6%). As most of our graduates find employment in small or medium companies, there is a slight discrepancy between where our graduates work and those employers who answered this interview.

How much are you satisfied with the involvement (Motivation? Hard work? Professional knowledge/ skills?) of SEEU graduates in the work they do in your company?

Not at all	0	0%
Very little	0	0%
Enough	16	50%
Very satisfied	16	50%

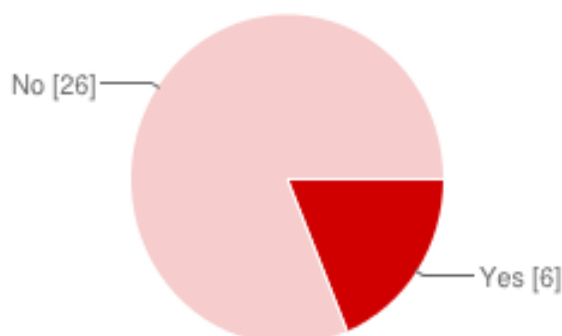
As may be seen, the highest rate of them answered this question with ‘enough’ and ‘very satisfied’, and none of them answered ‘not at all’ or ‘very little’. This is consistent with the graduates’ answers that the companies are satisfied with them in the work they do now. This answer from both groups suggests that SEEU graduates are prepared for the job market, which does not support my hypothesis that they are not. We see further verification of this in the questions reported below.

Are SEEU graduates prepared for the labor market for your company requirements?

Not at all	1	3%
Very little	0	0%
Enough	15	47%
Very satisfied	16	50%

This question attempted to measure company satisfaction with way SEEU graduates prepare have been prepared for the job they are doing. As can be seen, most of them are satisfied, 47% and 50%. Only 3% of them are not satisfied at all. It indicates again that recruiters are satisfied by SEEU graduates’ preparation for the trade market needs.

Do you think that SEEU curricula should change? If yes, please give your suggestions



Yes	6	19%
No	26	81%

It is important to note that 19% of company representatives claim that SEEU curricula should be changed. This is a good level of recruiter satisfaction, but does indicate that there is still significant work to be done. When asked for their meaning on how to change the curricula, their suggestions were: to add additional courses for Java; to update programmes to align to what customers ask and trends indicate; to combine courses with certificates; to teach accounting; to arrange in situ practical work before employment; to offer multidisciplinary subjects; to offer instruction in management; to provide instruction in marketing.

SEEU graduates have enough knowledge of English for the job they do

Yes	31	97%
No	1	3%
English not needed	0	0%

SEEU graduates have enough knowledge of computers for the job they do

Yes	31	97%
No	1	3%
IT skills not needed	0	0%

SEEU graduates have the ability to work in groups appropriate for the job they do.

Yes	31	97%
No	1	3%

The three questions directly above replicate those asked of the graduates: how satisfied with the English, computer, and teamwork ability of SEEU graduates the employers are. These again have a strong correlation with the results reported by the graduates themselves. A consistent 97% of interviewed company representatives stated that SEEU graduates have an employment-adequate ability in the English language, in IT skills and in teamwork. Again, these are heartening results in skills required by employers in many varied fields.

Conclusions and Applied Data

The above mentioned data contain facts relevant to the hypotheses of this paper:

- *If a Career Centre, University representatives and employers continuously cooperate with students, then students will be more prepared for today's job market.*
 - 30% of graduates answered that subjects they attended during the study period were not adequate for the job they are working in now;
 - 30% of them attended additional courses after their employment for professional development;
 - 20% of company representatives think that SEEU curricula should change.
- *SEEU's curricula do not follow the job market trends.*

- 60% of graduated students think that their undergraduate faculty programme helped them in the labor market;
- 73% of them think that the subjects they attended during the study period were adequate for the job they are performing now;
- 93% have adequate English knowledge;
- 98% have adequate computer programme knowledge;
- 92% have the ability to work in groups;
- 81% of company representatives think that SEEU's curricula should not change.
- *SEEU students are not prepared for the job market.*
 - 50% of company representatives state that SEEU graduates are prepared 'a lot,' and 47% of company representatives claim 'enough'.
- *Company representatives in Macedonia cannot find compatible graduates for employment.*
 - Do you find any difficulties with them regarding their professional development?
 - 100% of company representatives have answered no.

Recommendations

As recommendations, I propose that round table meetings be arranged with SEEU representatives from each Faculty, SEEU graduates/current students and company representatives. These open and cooperative sessions will help in creating curricula for the new generations which will continue to reflect and to follow international and local job market needs.

Further recommendations suggested by this study, and perhaps to be considered by the round table participants, would be: to add more practical subjects to the programmes; to focus on in situ practice for the students; to add subjects with certificates; to add updated courses on computer sciences; and to schedule regular meetings with graduates, company representatives and university representatives, even if only for social purposes, to strengthen the cooperative ties amongst students, graduates, academics, and entrepreneurs.

Bibliography

1. Grieves, J. (2003). *Strategic Human Resource Development*. London: Sage Publications.
2. Hoon, T. H. (2000). *Trade, Jobs and Wages*. UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
3. Qirici, S. (2005). *Ekonomiksi I punës*. Tiranë: Leksione
4. Cohen, S.I. (1994). *Human Resource Development and Utilization*. England: Avebury.
5. Raymond, A. Noe (1997). *Readings in Human Resource Management*. USA: Irwin McGraw-Hill.
6. Powell, R (2004). *Career Planning Strategies Hire me!* USA
7. Farrington, R. (9/24/2014). The long term impact of student loan debt on universities. *Forbes*:
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/robertfarrington/2014/09/24/the-long-term-impact-of-student-loan-debt-on-universities/>
8. Laster, M. (2014). Six business skills every new graduate needs to develop. *Career-advice*.
<http://career-advice.monster.com/in-the-office/starting-a-new-job/business-skills-for-new-graduates/article.aspx>
9. Tols, M. (1996-2014). *Career Skills Think about your career*. Mind Tools.
http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_CDV.htm

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Heather Henshaw

h.henshaw@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract

The quality of higher education in the Republic of Macedonia has four pillars. The first is higher education law including the numerous recent amendments. The second is the Accreditation and Evaluation Board, a legally independent body, charged with the (re) accreditation of higher education study programmes and with monitoring and developing the quality of higher education across public and private HE institutions. The third is internal quality assurance within institutions and Faculties or Departments themselves. The fourth is student experience and opinion. These function in relation to the wider framework of the Bologna process and European Quality Assurance trends and developments. This paper aims to investigate the operation, experience and impact of these pillars, with a focus on evaluation processes and structures. This research will be conducted through an analysis of published documentation, and with a questionnaire/interview with identified university personnel. The aim is to analyze the current stage of development of QA in Macedonia and to evaluate its impact. The recommendations from this might be useful nationally and institutionally.

Key words: *quality assurance, analysis, evaluation, value, development*

Introduction

The importance of quality assurance in higher education in the Republic of Macedonia is attested to in law, government policy, higher education strategy, the published documentation of the Evaluation and Accreditation Board and in various mission statements, policies and self-evaluation reports from individual institutions. The strategies and documentation indicate that the QA systems are well developed. They include positive mission statements, performance criteria, complex guidelines for processes such as external evaluation, institutional self-evaluation reports, and a ranking system aimed at demonstrating the quality of provision. The genuine commitment to aiming for the highest standards is manifest. For example, in a keynote presentation to the Quality Conference held at SEEU in June 2014, Professor Ljupco Kevereski, a member of the Evaluation and Accreditation Board, stated that ‘ in the Republic of Macedonia, assuring quality in higher education is a constant trend and tendency and also a key element in the reform of higher education and one of the prerequisites for joining the European educational area, without which the functioning and compatibility of higher educational institutions would be impossible.’

However, a closer analysis of the approach and implementation of national QA policies and the experience of senior higher education managers suggest that there may be significant tensions and discrepancies between the 'on paper' vision and policy and the reality, and that this might impact negatively on stakeholders' efforts at improvement. In examining this hypothesis, the following general areas were considered: context, definitions and approaches, international involvement and impact, national law, the Accreditation and Evaluation Board, institutional quality assurance and the involvement of students.

Methodology

In order to analyze the development and impact of quality assurance in the Republic of Macedonia, and to consider how far different international, national and institutional drivers have supported improvement in higher education in the country, a number of different methods were employed as follows:

- analysis of specific European policies and strategies on quality assurance such as the ENQA Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, EUA Work and Policy areas (QA and Transparency), the EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme as well as the remit of the regional quality assurance body, the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA);
- consideration of two external reports giving a national overview of the status of quality assurance in the country. One was a country report funded by the Norwegian Research Council produced within the framework of the project ‘European Integration of Higher Education and Research in the Western Balkans’ (Vujacic, Djordjevic, Kovacevic, Sunderic, 2013), and the other from the

Western Balkans Regional Observatory for Quality Assurance (CUBRIK) Tempus project, 2009 – 2011;

- review of national higher education law and strategy documents, the Accreditation and Evaluation Board Rule Book and examples of institutional self-evaluation reports;
- interviews with quality representatives such as a relevant Pro-Rector, Self-Evaluation Commission or Commission Chair, including 10 out of 20 institutions, public, private and academic/ professional orientated, with non-attributable, open comment.

Evaluative documents and legal framework – analysis and comment

The quality assurance context has been described as problematical in external project reports and by the Macedonian government itself. The CUBRIK project mentioned above, which aimed to strengthen the quality assurance system in the universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia at university, national and regional levels concluded that, 'In South Eastern European (SEE) countries,...Balkan countries also face significant problems with the quality assurance which adversely affects the quality of HEIs.' (CUBRIK, 2013). The National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005-2015 (Ministry of Education and Science, 2005) identified three key weaknesses: absence of a coherent system of quality control at a central level, absence of an independent body in charge of quality control, and lack of professionals trained in quality assessment and control. It planned to 'take measures for the permanent ensuring and control of the quality of the education system in Macedonia' by being 'objective in monitoring and controlling the imposition of legal solutions in the field of education.' (Ministry of Education, 2005). In this strategy, the Ministry identified the Evaluation and Accreditation Authority to undertake this role nationally, with 'The internal control of quality in higher education... [remaining] within the competence of the universities.'

According to the report from the Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency (EACEA) entitled 'Higher Education in FRYOM', four key areas for improvement were identified:

- Strengthening the Higher Education Accreditation Board and the Agency for Evaluation of Higher Education and merging them into one national body;
- Introducing student/employers into decision-making bodies and QA processes (public and private institutions);
- Introducing international cooperation in the quality assurance process (peer reviewers, other quality assurance agencies and/or relevant associations);
- Gaining national QA bodies' membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) so that the national quality assurance system complies with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education. (EACEA, 2010)

The evidence available suggests that these aims have, at best, only been partially achieved. For example, the merged Evaluation and Accreditation Board (EAB), whilst continuing to operate curriculum accreditation, has yet to engage in any institutional evaluation or quality assurance programme. Students have been included legally in key decision-making bodies at national and institutional level but with limited evidence of impact. There is no publically available information at the time of writing that the EAB has yet engaged international peer reviewers or taken advantage of other quality assurance agencies' expertise for training or support. Macedonia remains only an Associate Member of the EUA; and, whilst being involved in the beginning with the Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agency (CEENQA), is now not listed as a member.

Therefore, the first key thing to note is the difference between the positive rhetoric, the stated level of improvement needed in the last decade and the apparent lack of realization of planned improvements which have recognized positive impact. There is also an apparent divergence of approach between national strategy and how universities see quality assurance.

According to the Macedonian Law on Higher Education (2014, Article 2.10 [in translation]), 'Quality assurance is an assessment of the quality of higher education covering numerous explicit procedures for assessment of the quality of the higher education institutions, academic staff, and their study programmes in accordance with the accepted procedures and standards and the guidelines (instructions) for quality assurance adopted by the European higher education quality assurance institutions and other organizations and associations having the role to establish and apply the European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area.' This approach focuses on a list of what is assessed and is dependent on reaching apparently 'accepted' external quality standards. It is backed up by inspection and financial penalty.

In marked contrast to this, interviewees highlighted an approach which is far more reflective, process- and outcome- based, institutionally appropriate and diverse. Their comments focused on quality assurance as a continuous process of honest evaluation 'holding up a mirror' as one commentator said. Their definitions included such elements as fit for purpose programmes and resources, effective systems and procedures for every aspect of activity covering learning and teaching, student experience, management, effective communication and improvement monitoring. Quality initiatives were seen as more formative and developmental, depending on honesty, active usage, increasing competences and adapted to national, institutional and stakeholder need. At the end of the day, a main outcome was employability where students' knowledge, skills and profile were objectively recognized and utilized. It is important to note that this institutional 'bottom up' developmental approach is very different from central, 'top down' control.

From the interviews, strengths and weaknesses in the current quality assurance landscape and operation were highlighted. Firstly, with regard to the 'international' factor and the attitude and approach to

international standards, guidelines, organizations, projects and evaluation reports, the value of external involvement was stressed very strongly and positively at all levels. It was seen as a point of reference, a positive starting point, useful for guidance. Both personnel and processes were trusted as more objective and expert. Some commentators highlighted that such input offered a chance to share experience, learn about different views and adapt them to local conditions. Involvement in such initiatives was a valuable, sometimes the only, source of funding and focused more strongly on sustainability and follow-on outcomes, seen as having more lasting value.

Issues were highlighted by interviewees: that external strategies and guidelines etc. were quoted but not implemented, the high standards were not realistic, that there was poor interpretation and/or implementation, a lack of broader involvement of both public and private institutions and sometimes, short term projects whose value was limited. There was a general view that international good practice was not shared widely enough between higher education stakeholders. In general, respondents were very keen to be involved in international quality assurance and to be able to use the experience as much as possible.

Interviewees were also asked about the national legal framework and there was a uniform view concerning the quality and impact of Higher Education Law and the multiple amendments since 2008. Most respondents stated that the legal framework was in theory designed to improve the quality of higher education in Macedonia. One person commented that the law was attempting to change an inert and passive educational system and to strengthen the level of competence of professors. All interviewees identified particular requirements which they believed had led to higher standards, such as the requirements for academic staff qualifications or the accreditation of mentors.

However, there was a catalogue of criticism for aspects of higher education policy, technical aspects of the law and its operation, as follows:

- Some government policies such as massification and dispersion were seen as very damaging to quality;
- Government media statements about higher education were generally focused on marketing government policy rather than serious engagement in quality issues for all HE institutions;
- The Law was over-regulatory with too frequent, uncoordinated amendments; It also contained non-credible, legal anomalies such as the mobility requirements (e.g. 30 members of staff to prestigious institutions regardless of size of institution);
- There was a serious resourcing and capacities mismatch;
- There was insufficient flexibility to take account of positive diversity of different universities, such as between research or more professional institutions, with the lack of flexibility evidence in legal provision, evaluation processes, legal inspections and the Republic of Macedonia Ranking exercise;

- The inspection regime was generally described as punitive, with over-legalistic application and significant financial cost in some cases. This limited both effectiveness and invited ‘paper compliance’. It also diverted institutions from engaging in broader quality initiatives and narrowed the possibilities for quality initiatives not specified in law;
- All this resulted in insufficient respect, trust and cooperation among institutions and national bodies, with little credible, wider debate or consultation on HE issues.

In summary, the law was not seen as a mechanism which supported quality enhancement.

The main body charged with quality assurance, the Accreditation and Evaluation Board, had a mixed review from respondents. According to Article 2.2 of the Law on Higher Education, 2014, this Board ‘conducts an external evaluation of the quality of the higher education institutions and the fulfillment of its activity. This includes the legally defined requirements for accreditation of institutional and study programmes, the evaluation of HE activities (learning and teaching, research, management, finance) as well as other activities and mechanisms to develop and maintain HE Quality.’ This body may open and close institutions, in consultation with the Ministry and government. The methods published in the Board Rule Book include external evaluation, self-evaluation and a system for evaluating academic staff quality.

The general view was that the accreditation process functioned adequately, though with need for regular review and development. Many respondents mentioned that the accreditation process needed to be more qualitative with better feedback and should be streamlined, for example not requiring re-accreditation for minor changes.

There is also an effective process published for the proposed external institutional evaluations, with a clear profile for evaluators and requirement for external training. However, in many of the interviews, two key issues were raised. Firstly, the Board was considered to be only semi-independent with 40% of members nominated/confirmed by government, including the President. This was seen to have a negative impact on credibility and ability to operate qualitatively. Secondly, the legally specified start for the process of external evaluation, March 2013, had not been met and there did not seem to be any feedback or use made by the legally required Self-Evaluation reports. There was no evidence of other quality initiatives. This body was therefore seen as potentially useful but needing to be more independent and to be more productive according to its own plans.

Interviews – analysis and comment

Interviewees also outlined their own institutional structures and initiatives for quality assurance. Institutions had clear quality structures in place, with Self-Evaluation Commissions as a key feature. They had different working methods as might be expected. Quality processes widely in use were the Self-Evaluation report, Student Evaluation Survey and making improvement through the academic

election and promotion process. Many respondents highlighted how they consulted with stakeholders and that their institutions had a commitment to a positive quality culture, responsibility sharing and multiple approaches. Some stressed the value of gaining international recognition, such as through ISO standards or international ranking such as Multirank. Several highlighted how their e-systems supported evaluation and improvement effectively.

Once again, limitations were detailed. Many interviewees felt that they had only limited resources, such as a quality officer/office, in order to focus on quality as much as they wanted. Some institutions found managing quality between organizational levels a challenge and between the centre and dispersed units. Two institutions felt that the role of their Self-Evaluation Commission could be strengthened and widened and processes/procedures implemented more actively. A number stressed the need to develop the competences of academic staff and the systems for managing staff performance, whether informally or formally. Finally, several interviewees pointed out that institutions needed time and space to develop and to see what worked. Constant changes in law diverted institutions from this broader task in a scramble for compliance.

It is clear that institutions have commitment to maintaining and improving the quality of their offer, are using internal processes to do this and would like to develop these further to be more effective.

Finally, the interview questions included one on the input from students and the impact on quality assurance of the 'student voice'. Students have the legal right to representation on national and institutional bodies, to have a Student Parliament and to be consulted via a Student Evaluation Survey. All respondents said that student representatives were included on their main decision making bodies such as the Senate and that input from their student survey provided a positive contribution to staff evaluation and curriculum development. They also asserted that, when students were serious, their opinions were valuable and positive. Many took an informal, individualized approach to solving student issues. Alumni were valued for their contribution. Issues highlighted were the transparency of how students were elected onto national bodies and also that student contribution depended on the competence and commitment of the individual representatives. Good representatives were only around for a limited time and their value could be affected if no good replacements were identified. Interviewees concluded that they valued student input, including comments for improvement and needed to have good representation to make the most of this contribution.

Institutional good practice

In concluding the summary of opinions given by interviewees, it was very encouraging to note how enthusiastic and committed they were to raising standards and the open discussion was informative. In the course of these interviews, a number of examples of institutional good practice were described, which are summarized below:

- International accreditation, evaluation and quality standards actively used;
- **Quality Champion system**, using external expertise, regular site visits, with the report used for planning and improvement at Faculty and institutional levels;
- **Self Evaluation Commission** with published regulations, effective process, follow up and identified improvements;
- **On-line QM system**, used actively for planning and development;
- **Consultative opportunities** for serious, critical, reflective debate;
- **Active, annual Action Planning** process at different institutional levels;
- **Explicit student led curriculum design** with a focus on small groups, individualized learning resulting in high employability;
- **E-assessment system** which supports the whole educational process;
- Structured Faculty Student Commission provides filter and advice;
- **Student Survey** used actively for development, strategic planning and promotion;
- **Structured process for course evaluation** every semester with clear follow- on action for performance issues;
- **360 appraisal** including teaching, research, service, involving students, other colleagues, administrative staff, the Dean, used for development and promotion.

Conclusions and recommendations

There are a number of key conclusions and recommendations which might be considered at national and institutional level.

Nobody is satisfied and we are not talking to each other. At a time when the government is preparing a new strategic plan for education, and flagging up its priorities for higher education, there should be a wide debate on future direction and policy and on the most appropriate approaches and methods for quality assurance. This should include meaningful consultation with institutional managers, staff, students and stakeholders. Competition and/or ineffective communication between Ministry and universities and between institutions - such as between public and private, large and small - is not conducive to longer term, sustainable improvement. We need to work in partnership to educate the nation's young people.

Government and institutions are adapting quite different strategies, on the one hand, highly controlling and driven by a rigid inspectorial regime and on the other, a more reflective, self-evaluative approach aiming at steady progress. One approach is interfering with and hindering the other. Top down is damaging bottom up instead of complementing it and the common aims of improving quality are not being effectively realized. It is recommended that a more integrated, flexible approach is employed.

We must also recognize that one size does not fit all. Policy must focus on quality not on the status or type of institution. Policies such as massification and dispersion should be carefully reconsidered in the light of experience. Framework legislation allowing for appropriate flexibility and autonomy should be written, with the removal of restrictive and inappropriate requirements and the constant need for small amendments. Diversity and specialism should be better recognized, whether in law, evaluation systems or ranking. Appropriate resources which are transparently allocated need to be identified to allow for a deeper focus on quality and the strengthening of expertise in this area.

As part of this renewed strategy and legal framework, institutions need support for their quality initiatives rather than control or punishment. The establishment of a structured inter-institutional group (Higher Education Advisory Partnership – HEAP) is recommended, to share and advise on good practice. Institutions must continue to develop and maximize the success of their quality processes and consider developing the remit of the Self -Evaluation Commission from just the self-evaluation report process to a wider role in quality enhancement, in a regular structured liaison with faculty/departmental units. Institutions also need to focus on academic performance, management and professional development to increase staff capacities.

Students should continue to be included at all levels. One idea suggested was for the creation of an inter-university student mobility scheme which would enable students from different places in Macedonia to interact more freely and productively.

We all want someone to help us externally and indeed this is often beneficial, especially if enough institutional partners are included and project resources and outcomes are shared, including with those not taking part directly. External standards and guidelines must be adapted to be workable within the national context and applied judiciously. Mobility should continue to be encouraged whilst removing unrealistic restrictions. The appropriate national agency must gain full recognition with specified organizations such as full EUA membership and active membership of CEENQA with clear steps and deadlines for achieving this. The European University Association (EUA) is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe and CEENQA is a regional leader. We cannot afford to be considered forever ‘transitional’ and unsuitable for or disinterested in membership.

A crucial contributor to future success is the effectiveness of the Accreditation and Evaluation Board. It is recommended by many interviewees that the roles of accreditation and evaluation are again separated so that the new bodies have more capacity to concentrate on their different roles; or at least establish different constituent parts which should work independently. The appointment regulations for members must ensure transparency. External training by a recognized expert in quality would be very beneficial for the work of institutional evaluation and a wider role in quality assurance. The Board could improve its web presence and dissemination of information, publish a SMART plan...and do it; and publish an annual report covering its activities.

Finally, we must all ‘mind the gap’, be honest and constructive in evaluating our capacity, not pretend that the statement matches or replaces the reality, foster collaboration, avoid meaningless or destructive rhetoric and focus on further developing a credible higher education system in Macedonia which is respected internally and across borders.

Bibliography

1. Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), Unit P10 - Tempus and Bilateral Cooperation with Industrialized Countries, "Higher Education in FYROM", http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/index_en.php, last update 2010, retrieved June 2014
2. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Occasional Paper 19: "Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area", <http://www.enqa.eu/indirme/Guidelines-for-external-reviews-of-quality-assurance-agencies-in-the-EHEA1.pdf>, retrieved June 2014
3. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area", 2009, Helsinki, 3rd edition, <http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/>, retrieved March 2014
4. Kevereski, L., Kuzinovsk, M., "Quality of the higher education imperative of the Board for Accreditation and Evaluation of the Republic of Macedonia", 2014, available on request at www.conference@seeu
5. Ministerstvo za obrazovanie i nauka na Republika Makedonija, "NATIONAL strategy for the development of education in the Republic of Macedonia : 2005-2015", 2005, ISBN 9989-2376-2-X
6. Vujacic, I., Djordjevic, S., Kovacevic, M., Sunderic, I., "Overview of Higher Education and Research Systems in the Western Balkans, Macedonia", 2013, <http://www.herdata.org/research/country-reports/68>, retrieved June 2014
7. Western Balkans Observatory for Quality Assurance (CUBRIK) 158999_Tempus_ES_SMGR, "Strengthening Quality Assurance System within Western Balkans HEIs in Support of National and Regional Planning", 2009, <http://www.cubrik.eu/content/background>, retrieved June 2014
8. "Zakon za visoko obrazovane", 2014, www.pravo.org, retrieved May 2014

STRATEGIC PLANNING IN FUNCTION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN MACEDONIA

Izet Zeqiri

i.zeqiri@seeu.edu.mk

Brikend Aziri

b.aziri@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract

This paper aims to highlight alternatives for implementing basic principles of strategic planning in higher education institutions, particularly in terms of creating the preconditions for these institutions to enjoy the many benefits of implementing genuine strategic planning. It should be noted though that due to the lack of data regarding strategic planning in universities in the Republic of Macedonia, the paper does not provide an analysis of the current circumstances in Macedonia. Having this in mind, the paper proposes several alternatives in the context of implementing strategic management in the field of situational analysis and in the determination of weaknesses and threats—along with the strengths and opportunities—as the basis for determining realistic and feasible strategic plans that would enable higher education institutions to confront future challenges more successfully. It should be emphasized that strategic planning is essentially a very complex process, involving both effort and a holistic approach in all areas of the organization and in the operation of the institutions of higher education. This process, in turn, requires the use and implementation of numerous basic techniques of strategic management, including SWOT analysis, PESTEL, activity analysis, analysis of human resource and needs and opportunities for reform, analysis and planning of financial flows, and so on. Proper planning and strategic professionalism, realized in institutions of higher education, are matters of quality management, especially considering the fact that plans are made primarily to be accomplished in practice and should be permanently monitored.

Key words: *strategic planning, academic management, quality administration*

The nature and importance of strategic management and strategic planning

Strategic management, being primarily concerned with the long-term future of business organizations is without any doubt of great importance for contemporary business. The creation and maintenance of a competitive advantage and through it a favourable market position is one of the most important aspects of strategic management.

Strategic management refers to the set of decisions and actions used to formulate and execute strategies that will provide a competitively superior fit between the organization and its environment so as to achieve organizational goals. Managers ask questions such as: What changes and trends are occurring in the competitive environment? Who are our competitors and what are their strengths and weaknesses? Who are our customers? What products or services should we offer, and how can we offer them most efficiently? What does the future hold for our industry, and how can we change the rules of the game? Answers to these questions help managers make choices about how to position their organizations in the environment with respect to rival companies. Superior organizational performance is not a matter of luck. It is determined by the choices that managers make. (Daft, 2010).

Strategic management is a set of managerial decisions and actions that determines the long run performance of a corporation. It includes environmental scanning (both external and internal), strategy formulation (strategic or long-range planning), strategy implementation, and evaluation and control. The study of strategic management, therefore, emphasizes the monitoring and evaluating of external opportunities and threats in light of a corporation's strengths and weaknesses. Originally called *business policy*, strategic management incorporates such topics as strategic planning, environmental scanning, and industry analysis. (Wheelen & Hunger, 2012).

Thompson and Martin (2005) provide a rather holistic approach towards strategic management presented in figure 1.

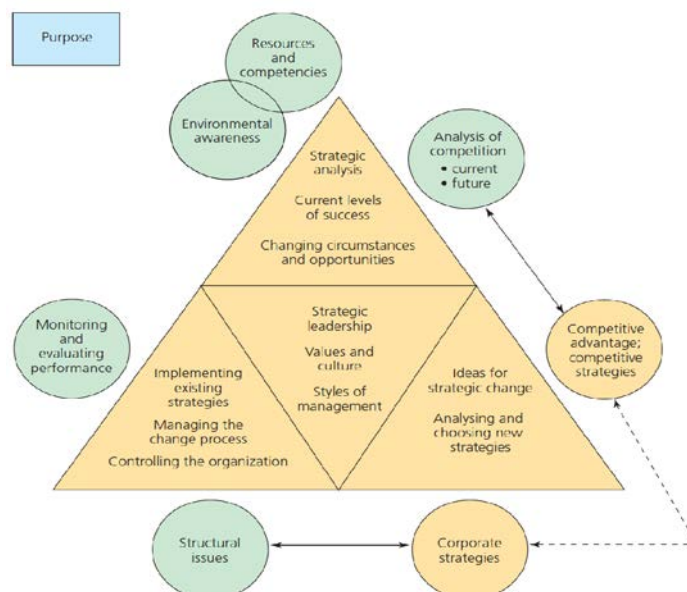


Fig. 1. Strategic management

A strategic plan spells out (1) the desired business or businesses the firm wants to be in, in terms of products, geographic sales area, and competitive advantage, and (2) the major steps it will take to get there, given (3) the company's opportunities and threats and internal strengths and weaknesses. (Desler & Philips, 2008).

According to Hill and Jones (2010), the formal strategic planning process has five main steps:

- Select the corporate mission and major corporate goals.
- Analyze the organization's external competitive environment to identify opportunities and threats.
- Analyze the organization's internal operating environment to identify the organization's strengths and weaknesses.
- Select strategies that build on the organization's strengths and correct its weaknesses in order to take advantage of external opportunities and counter external threats. These strategies should be consistent with the mission and major goals of the organization. They should be congruent and constitute a viable business model.
- Implement the strategies.

Strategic planning is without a doubt a very difficult task and one might argue that it is in the very heart of strategic management. Its complexity is obvious having in mind the following process of strategic planning.

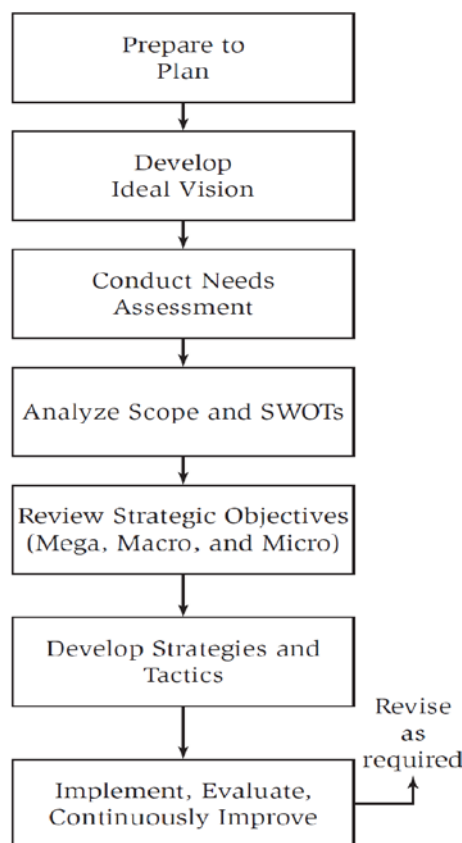
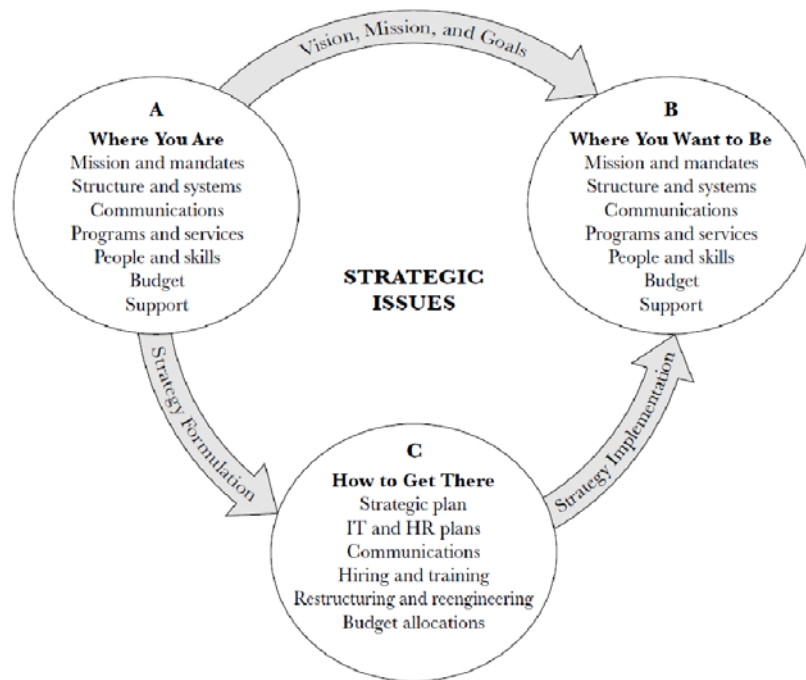


Fig.2. The process of strategic planning (Kaufman et al, 2003).

Bryson (2004) goes a step further and presents what might be called the ABC of strategic planning, figure 3.



Strategic planning is a management tool to look at the future and see tomorrow's opportunities or challenges to gain competitive position. Managers who think in terms of today are behind the times tomorrow. Competitive strategic planning not only predicts future events but also influences them and energizes resources and activities. The evolutionary process integrates decisions and actions into a vision of where the organization wants to be in the future, rather than allowing daily demands to determine the organization's future direction and position in the marketplace. While the *mission* represents the concept of the business, the *vision* refers to the future direction of the company. Sometimes they are combined in one statement, although they may have separate statements. (Alkhafaji, 2003).

Strategic planning for institutions of higher education

Universities are driven to engage in a strategic planning process by a variety of forces. These include increasing demand for higher education concurrent with a decline in government funding, changing student demographics, and a need to compete with the emerging models of higher education while keeping the essence of a traditional comprehensive university. A strategic planning process can help prepare a university to face these emerging challenges. (Lerner, 1999).

The emergence of strategic planning in higher education coincided with the difficulties experienced in all of education in the 1970s and 1980s, as enrollments began to fluctuate, student demographics started to change, and funding became inconsistent. At this point, futures research and the rise of technology-enabled data collection and analysis pointed the way to strategic planning as one solution for developing a proactive stance in the environment of changing demands and declining resources. . . . At its beginning, the strategic plan in post-secondary education was viewed as a tool to articulate institutional mission and

vision help prioritize resources, and promote organizational focus. As a result, many of the early strategic planning efforts produced documents that described the institution, but did little to motivate a process. These “shelf documents” often sowed the seeds of discontent within the institution, since many who participated in the process spent long hours on the plan’s development and then saw relatively little implementation. (Hinton, 2012).

As determined by Paris (2003) a successful strategic planning process for higher education institutions would require five main elements:

- **People.** Having the right people means that all the key stakeholders are represented in some way. Usually this is done through a representation system where each participant in the planning event is there representing a particular stakeholder group--students, business, faculty, classified staff, academic staff, affiliated agencies and the like. The responsibility of all participants is to take the preliminary planning results back to the group they represent to receive feedback.
- **Data.** One of the connections between strategic planning and continuous quality improvement is the reliance on data as the basis for decision-making. Data on stakeholder/customer needs and their evaluation of existing services are required for the planning process. The more hard data that are available to describe the current situation, the better the chances of a good plan.
- **Preparation.** Those who are planning the future of their department, school, college or institution should be adequately prepared for the task. It is unwise to plan without some notion of the many alternative directions and what others have found to be successful. It is common for an educational institution to invite futurists to speak to the planning team prior to the planning event.
- **A structured planning process.** Most of us have attended at least one meeting where everyone talked but when it was all over, nothing had been accomplished. This common experience points out the need for a structured planning process. Structured means designated and sequenced activities such as brainstorming, small group work, listing, summarizing, prioritizing and the like.
- **Resources of time and dollars.** The costs of a sound planning process and the time required for optimal planning were both discussed earlier. Both inadequate time and too much time are detrimental to the process.

Institutional planning has evolved and matured in the United States over recent decades. In fact, the progress that has been made is so significant compared with many higher education systems throughout the world that a disconnect has materialized. Internationalization has brought students, scholars, institutions and other partners together throughout the world in meaningful ways. This must also occur within the arena of planning. It is important for those in the United States who are fully engaged in advancing institutional planning to recognize the enormous chasm that separates their progress with the neophyte aspirations of some other countries. European countries are at different stages of development, but virtually all of them recognize the merits of properly executed institutional planning. Many are

struggling to find ways to turn their aspirations into realities. This does not mean that those well-versed in the process can simply parachute into other countries and transform them through lock-step consulting approaches. It's not that simple. In fact, a few failed attempts to introduce planning in other countries can change optimism into pessimism very quickly and curtail further interest. (Machado & Taylor, 2010). Even though a number of strategic planning techniques and approaches have been developed primarily by the business community and the same can in a modified form be applicable to Universities, one of the main issues is of an organizational nature and has to do mainly with the very intentions of the strategic planning process.

In the best case scenario, that is, in the case of a University that is interested in preparing proper strategic plans, utilize its own resources in doing so and is really committed to applying strategic planning, this would require proper cooperation between the central levels, departments, faculty and work teams that might be created.

A possible approach as to the way a formal strategic planning process within an institution of higher education can be organized is presented in figure 2.

Fig 4. Organizing the process of strategic planning in a institution of higher education (Luxton, 2005)

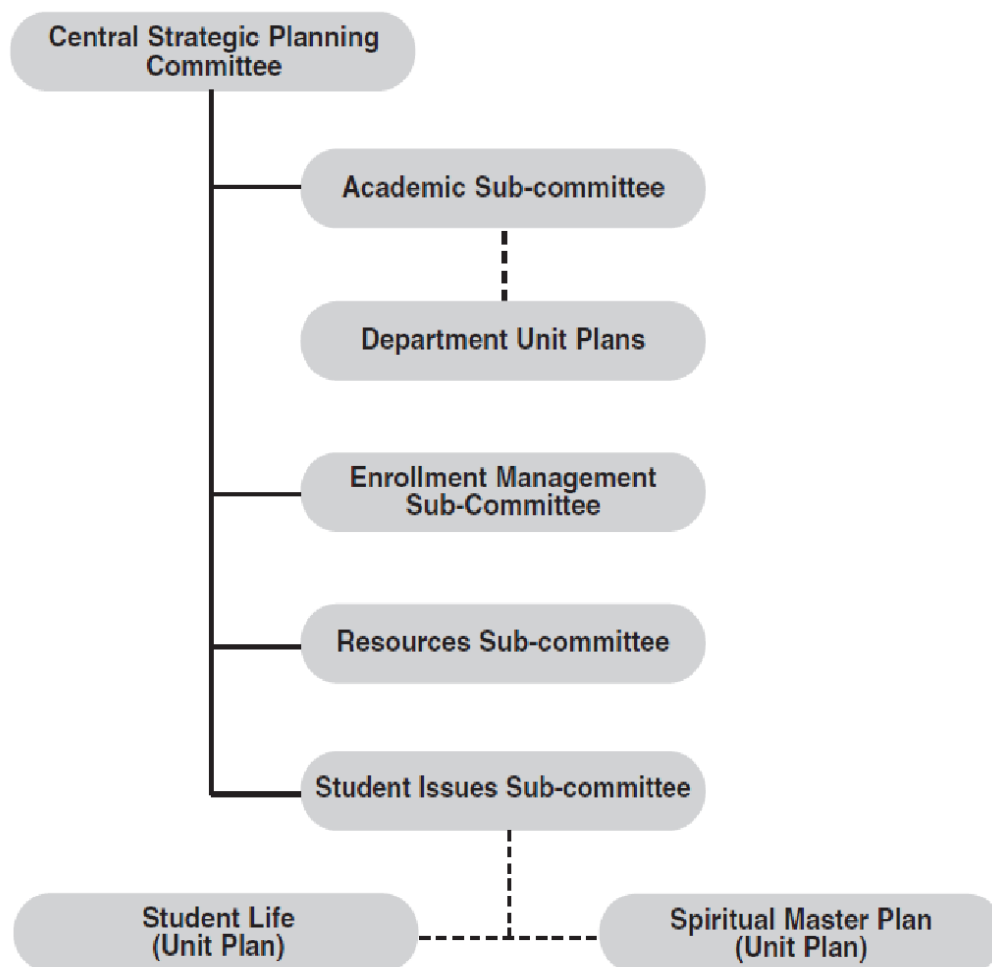


Fig 4. Organizing the process of strategic planning in a institution of higher education (Luxton, 2005)

Strategic planning techniques, lessons learned from the business community

Many different types of techniques for strategic planning are used by business organizations worldwide depending on the factors and needs. Although many approaches for their classification have been developed by authors worldwide, perhaps the simplest but at the same time very appropriate approach for the needs of this paper is to analyze these techniques from two different points of view: techniques that are used to assess positions and those that are utilized in order to make decisions. Having in mind the nature of higher education institutions in the Republic of Macedonia and the circumstances under which they function, several of these techniques are presented below.

PESTEL analysis

The main rationale behind PESTEL is to provide a proper analysis of the factors and trends from the external environment that can influence the business organization, its strategy, market position etc.

PESTEL is an acronym for the following trends: political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal, figure 6.

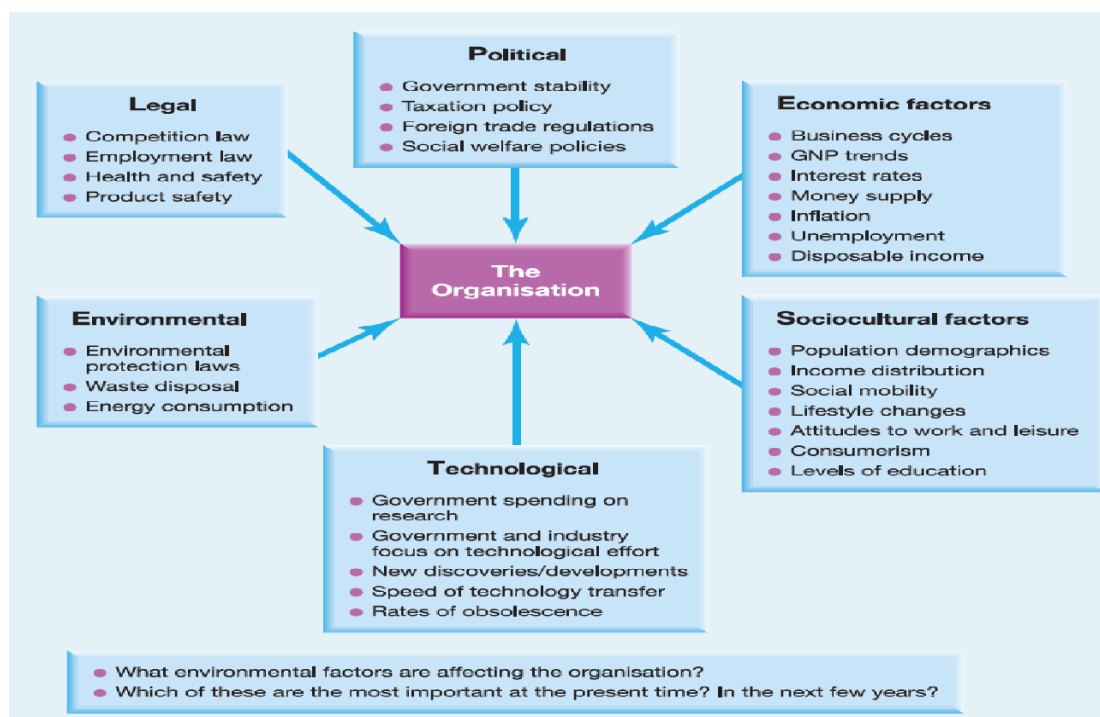


Fig. 5. PESTEL analysis

As can be noticed from the figure above, PESTEL is a complex analysis that requires time, resources and knowledge to be prepared and used in order to provide for a better competitive market position.

In terms of providing support for the higher education institutions in the Republic of Macedonia, PESTEL can be used in order to determine the most critical fields in which these institutions need support and support can be provided to them. These fields may then require the attention of the central government in terms of providing financial support for the universities, departments and individual researchers and/or research teams as well as providing a proper legal, political and economical environment.

SWOT analysis

Another important technique that can be used by higher education institutions is the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, fig. 8.

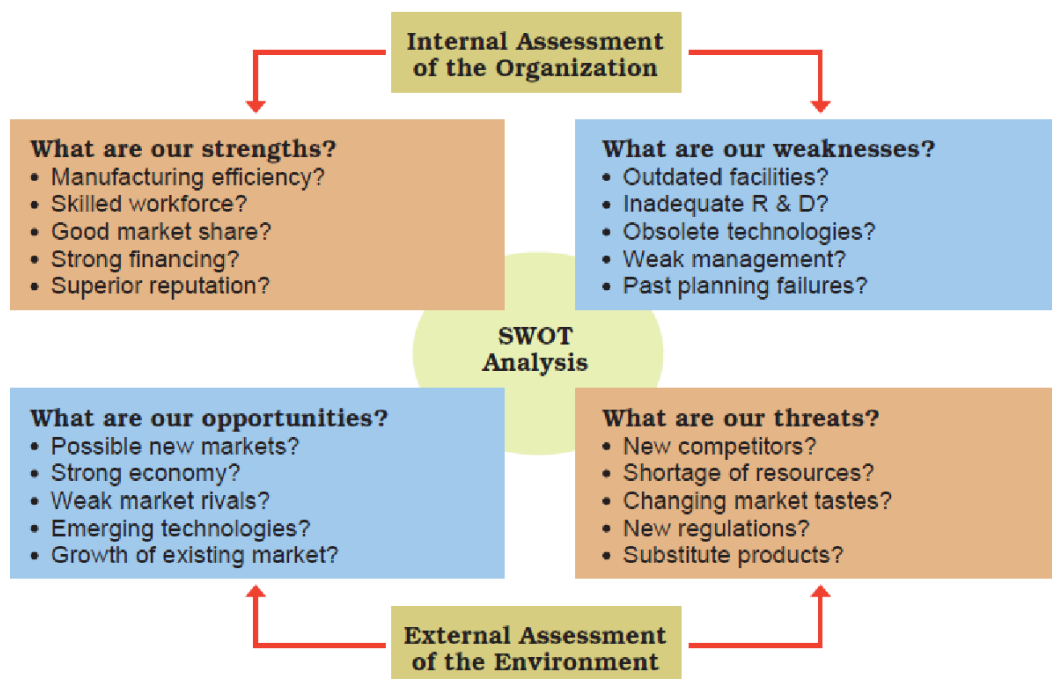


Fig. 6. SWOT analysis (Schermehorn, 2010)

SWOT is an organizational attempt to provide a structured, easy to comprehend analysis of the main factors from the internal and the external analysis that present chances or potential limitations for the organizations strategy and market position.

Although mostly designed and intended for business organizations, SWOT can be used by higher education institutions in order to determine the main factors and ways how of overcoming obstacles.

Scenario analysis

Scenario analysis, a technique that was originally designed and used for military purposes, can be very helpful for Universities in the Republic of Macedonia having in mind that this technique is used mainly by organizations that function in a changing, unstable environment where making forecasts regarding the possible futures for the organization is difficult or even impossible. Therefore, under such circumstances organizations prepare different possible scenarios, that is, plans of their actions based on assumptions for the possibilities of market developments.

Scenarios are detailed and plausible views of how the business environment of an organization might develop in the future based on groupings of key environmental influences and drivers of change about which there is a high level of uncertainty. For example, in the energy industries, given lead times and costs of exploration, there is a need for views of the business environment of 20 years or even more. Whilst a whole host of environmental issues are of relevance, a number of these, such as raw material availability, transmission and storage technologies and subsequent prices and demand, are of crucial

importance. Obviously, it is not possible to forecast precisely such factors over a 20-year-plus times of the horizon, but it can be valuable to have different views of possible futures. (Johnson et al, 2005). In the case of universities in Macedonia such scenarios would mostly depend on assumptions regarding conditions such as the level of natality, migrations and the political future of the country.

Competitive forces model

The competitive forces model was developed by Michael Porter and it consists of five interconnected elements, presented in figure 8.

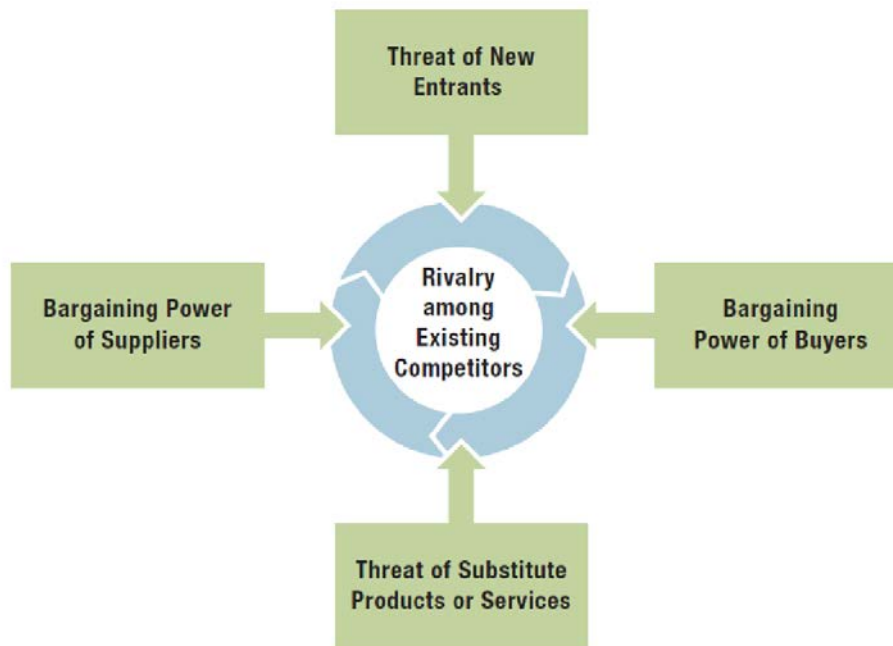


Fig.7. Porter's five forces model (Rothaermel, 2015)

When developing his model, Porter argued that as the forces grow stronger, they limit the ability of established companies to raise prices and earn greater profits. Within Porter's framework, a strong competitive force can be regarded as a threat because it depresses profits. A weak competitive force can be viewed as an opportunity because it allows a company to earn greater profits. The strength of the forces may change over time as industry conditions change. Managers face the task of recognizing how changes in the forces give rise to new opportunities and threats, and formulating appropriate strategic responses. In addition, it is possible for a company, through its choice of strategy, to alter the strength of one or more of the forces to its advantage. (Hill & Jones, 2013).

Conclusions and recommendations

Strategic planning can prove to be a factor of immense importance for the long term survival and market positions of organizations including higher education institutions. The aim of the paper was not to provide insights regarding the extent to which such institutions in the Republic of Macedonia prepare adequate

strategic plans but rather to mention and analyze several of the most commonly used techniques for strategic planning that can be in a modified form implemented in higher education institutions.

Several steps should be undertaken in the future in terms of using strategic planning as a tool to foster quality in the institutions of higher education in the Republic of Macedonia. First of all, the level of awareness regarding the importance of strategic planning should be increased. Higher education institutions that is their governing bodies should become more aware regarding the many benefits that can arise from strategic planning, but at the same time have in mind that the objective of strategic planning is not only to underline past success but rather to set the road for future success. The strategic planning process should be made as transparent as possible and opportunities for including interested faculty should be created. This would result in a sense of common ownership over the plan and thus more support in the implementation phase.

References

1. Daft, R.L 2010, Management, Ninth edition, South-Western Cengage Learning, Ohio
2. Wheelen, T.L & Hunger, J.D. 2012, Strategic management and business policy: Toward global sustainability, Pearson, Boston
3. Thompson J & Martin, F 2005, Strategic management: Awareness and change,
4. Dessler, G & Philips, J 2008, Managing now, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston
5. Hill, C.W.L & Jones, G.R. 2013, Strategic management: An integrated approach, tenth edition, South-Western Cengage Learning, Ohio
6. Kaufman, R & Browne, H.O & Watkins, R & Leigh, D 2003, Strategic planning for success: aligning people, performance and payoffs, Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, New Yersey
7. Bryson, J.M 2004, Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement, John Wiley & Sons, Inc, San Francisco
8. Alkhafaji, A.F. 2003, Strategic management : formulation, implementation, and control in a dynamic environment, The Haworth Press, New York
9. Lerner, A.L 1999, “A Strategic Planning Primer for Higher Education”,
<http://www.csun.edu/~strplan/index.html>
10. Hinton, K.E 2012, A Practical Guide to Strategic Planning in Higher Education, Society for College and University Planning
11. Paris, K.A 2003, Strategic planning in the university
12. Machado, M.L & Taylor, J.S, 2010, “The struggle for strategic planning in European higher education: the case of Portugal”, Research in Higher Education Journal
13. Luxton A, 2005, Strategic planning in higher education, General Conference Department of Education
14. Schermerhorn J.R 2010, Exploring management, second edition, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New Yersey
15. Johnson, G & Scholes, K & Whittington,R, 2005, Exploring corporate strategy:Text and cases, second edition, Financial Times Prentice Hall imprint, Essex
16. Rothaermel, F.T 2015, Strategic management, second edition, McGraw-Hill Education,, New York

SELF-EVALUATION IN THE FUNCTION OF MORE EFFICIENT USAGE OF RESOURCES IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES IN THE MILITARY ACADEMY, “GENERAL MIHAILO APOSTOLSKI – SKOPJE”

Muhamet Racaj

Ivica Danevski

Ministry of Defense of Republic of Macedonia

Army of Republic of Macedonia

Abstract

The process of self-evaluation at the Military Academy is an important part of the educational process by which the quality of study programmes is determined and it represents a tool for evaluation for the institution which implements it. It is a necessary phase in the educational process, and it does not mean that the process of self-evaluation itself returns us to something new. The identification of what should be qualitative education and the provision of quality indicators is an obligation of educational institutions. Bearing responsibility for ensuring quality staff contributes both to the level of quality of study programmes and the relevance of the institution. The responsibility of the educational institution is evident from looking at the broad offer of programmes for cadets, specialists, masters and also civil personnel who advance their education at this higher educational institution. The educational institution with its choice of educational programmes develops specific competitive advantages in relation to other higher educational institutions and these advantages are expressed through unique specifics of the educational process. That means that the existence of the Military Academy is founded on a concern for offering and ensuring qualitative educational programmes which specifically develop the inter-operative skills and abilities of students.

In that direction, self-evaluation, perceived as analytical evaluation of educational policies and programmes, aims to improve information due to a decrease of the independence in the educational process. The better management of educational programmes and the efficient usage of resources at the Military Academy is based on qualitative analysis and relevant quantitative data. This enables the assessment of quality of higher educational activity and of the academic staff at the Military Academy. The aim of this paper is to suggest that there is a need of continual improvement of the self-evaluation process which is in the interests of the study programmes and their appropriate delivery. This aim is reflected in the process of evaluation expressed through intellectual capital, which, when implemented, offers high value.

Key words: *evaluation, training, quality, assessment, intellectual capital.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of each country involves a range of elements which equally without mutual exclusiveness determine socio-economic development. One of the developmental elements of each country is higher education which, apart from generating contemporary processes in line with the globalization era, provides legitimacy for the country in international relations. Maintaining the pace with the contemporary world cannot be reduced to political and economic globalization since it predetermines the essential need of educational globalization that has a convergent influence on sustainability on which the diversity of their future is based. There is a substantial need in the development of higher education to determine access to globalization processes. Along with that, society faces the consequences or benefits of globalization.

The ability of individuals and societies to exist and endure in imposed surroundings is determined by the educational system, which should respond to the challenge of change with innovation.

Science is at the forefront of fulfilling generated societal processes by providing new solutions that have use value. Technical-technological development puts knowledge on a pedestal and promotes societal development in all spheres. It is obvious that in these conditions, systems of values are being changed and subsequently they also change the way of living. That is the result of the creation of contemporary and detailed flexible systems of assessment in higher education. The request for greater efficiency and quality in the educational system unambiguously stresses the need of superceding uniformity of assessment with application of new forms, methods, techniques, procedures and models of assessment in all aspects.

Education, therefore, is vital. It is an organized and continuous communication secured in order to enable learning or in other words “Education is a fundamental human right. It enables children, young and adults to think critically, to make choices and to improve their lives. It breaks the closed circle of poverty and it is a key element of economical and social development”. (EFA, UNESCO)

NEED FOR SELF-EVALUATION

The process of self-evaluation in the Military Academy aims for the creation, analysis and checking of the efficiency of study programmes. This is done by using knowledge from different disciplines in the military-professional area such as economy, sociology, psychology, andragogy and many other sciences. During this process, examples of good practice and mistakes that should be avoided in future are identified. Self-evaluation, as a process of implementing logical interventions, is in the function of realizing its hierarchic subordinate aims and is a basis for evaluating educational processes. In general, the definition of evaluation stresses sharing of grades in a timely manner, determines the criteria for assessment and forms the structure of the evaluation report. It is a product that provides a set of final results for self-evaluation. The report produces an indicative set of needed interventions, and identifies

tools and techniques to gain perspective on the educational process, and to achieve agreed special and general goals. The value of self-evaluation is in the practical application and use value of the process. The description of specific factors that influence the degree of usage of the results realized in practice aims towards more efficient usage of resources in educational programmes.

The beginning of a self-evaluation project is determined by financial, material and personal inputs needed for the realization of certain activities and for the production of results of the project. The process includes everything that is directly produced (created) or is envisaged during the implementation of the educational process. On the basis of the results, the degree to which the educational-teaching process has reached its aims is measured. This represents the first level of aims of a self-evaluation project. The results of the project are linked with direct and /or indirect users of study programmes. The results are the direct effect of the final, needed interventions for the study programmes, and these results determine the degree to which the self-evaluation report is successful in the realizing specific aims. Expectations are that the final results of a self-evaluation report are visible and measurable.

A study program that can be called individual consists of more projects for which the self-evaluation report determines separately whether the goals have been reached for each teaching project. By that, general aims in National strategy or other global strategy in education are achieved. General or global aims in this context are related to a set of aims for each study programme. These aims are evidenced by a great number of projects whose implementation is planned in a longer period of time in relation to the time of completion of a self-evaluation project. The realization of general goals is the most important during evaluations from which long term effects and extent of influence from logical intervention may be perceived. Sustainable results from self-evaluation increase the possibility for achieving overall long term aims, which means that the assets were efficiently used.

It can be concluded that the operational goals are expressed in relation to projected teaching (as it is in providing appropriate training for cadets) in order to secure the realization of specific aims of the project with visible results (for example, acquiring military skills), which are appropriate to the global aim that is perceived through the long term influence of general aims of the study programme or projects (for example, the training of new officers for warrant officer duties).

The interdependence of effects, results and influence of certain types of programme aims is shown in Fig.1.

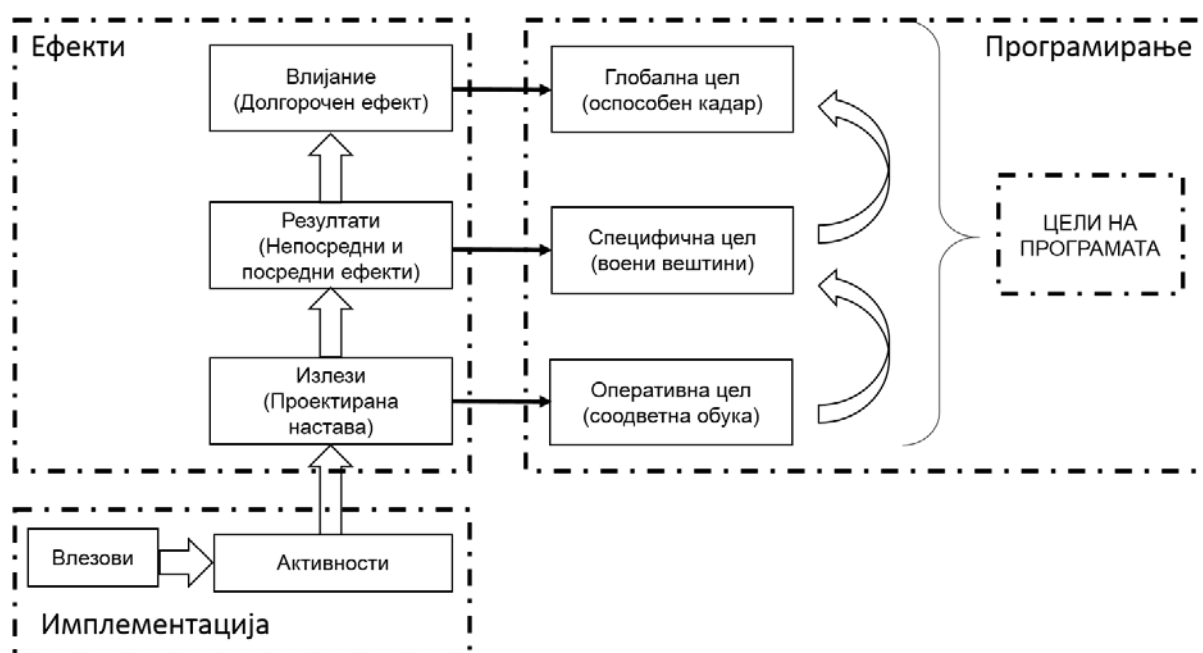


Figure 1: Logic sequence of respective elements in intervention logic of the programme level

The value of assets reflects the intention to implement separate interventions in all phases of the life cycle of any intervention. This is very important to verify to what extent the purpose is being achieved and the objectives successfully realized. This can be verified through evaluation or evaluations. Regardless of which phase of implementation of change you might be in, self-evaluation can be defined as a process that enables the measurement of interventions in relation to results and their influence by which the needs of the study programme should be met. It means that “self-evaluation is a professional process of self-assessment by which educational organizations systematically receive data for the quality of their work and it is a mechanism that enables educational organizations with their own assets from inside to improve the quality of their work “. ⁸ The basic aim is, with its own assets, to raise quality during the process of verifying the key characteristics of any institution, by its own initiative or by management initiative. This is achieved with the assistance of employees who assess the state of their organizations, take action (intervention) in the case of irregularities, propose measures for improvement and increase the quality of work. ⁹ In essence, self-evaluation represents an objective way of determining what we want to know using defined criteria for specific aspects of the educational organization, different ways of measurement and methods of evaluation which are pursued as being more effective. ¹⁰

⁸ Lešnik M., Bergant K. in K., (2001), *Samoevalvacija v vzgojno izobraževalnih ustanovah*. Ljubljana: Inštitut za psihologijo osebnosti, str. 9.

⁹ Same, page.10.

¹⁰ Štrajn D., (2000), *Evalvacija*. Pedagoški inštitut, Ljubljana, str.6-7.

PRINCIPLES AND BASIS OF SELF-EVALUATION

There is internal and external evaluation. External is defined as evaluation whereas internal as self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is divided to software and institutional.

Software self-evaluation is used to identify problems and to secure guarantees for quality in educational institutions. It is being used in the cases where there is an interest in the quality of study programmes and when the management has a need or wants to check their comparability and competitiveness.¹¹

Institutional self-evaluation provides reports, and guarantees the quality of the educational organization as an institution. An institution can choose different approaches for self-evaluation.¹²

The aims and tasks of self-evaluation can be certified externally such as by governmental agencies or broker houses for quality control and by identifying the wider context of higher educational institutions. A great number of aims and tasks are raised by internal self-evaluation, groups that want to improve the functioning of the organization.

Self-evaluation in the Military Academy, as one of the steps of the evaluation process, is based upon three main objectives:

- Representation of short and substantial review of the teaching process including the influence of scientific-research work upon the teaching –educational process;
- Analysis of weak and strong points of this institution and
- Provision of evidence to support understanding of the difference between posed and realized objectives.

Self-evaluation, directed towards analysis and assessment, gives recommendations for important issues that come from the Statute of the Military Academy. It determines the vision and aims of the Academy and informs the Strategy for their realization, supports study programmes by certifying the degree of participation of teachers, collaborators, cadets and students. It verifies exam results in accordance with the structure of the study programmes (core, electives, free electives, general, specializations, theory, practical, and laboratory). It also determines the duration of study programmes as well as retention data by academic year. It directs attention towards the success of cadets, i.e. students, and it identifies the influence of equipment (library resources, computer equipment, reading rooms etc.) on the effectiveness of the studies. It orients the study programmes of the Military Academy in the right direction and that they are in accordance with accreditation and license requirements for higher educational activity.

¹¹ Lešnik M., Bergant K.in K., (2001), *Samoevalvacija v vzgojno izobraževalnih ustanovah*. Ljubljana: Inštitut za psihologijo osebnosti, str.14.

¹² Lešnik M., Bergant K.in K., (2001), *Samoevalvacija v vzgojno izobraževalnih ustanovah*. Ljubljana: Inštitut za psihologijo osebnosti, str.15-18.

Self-evaluation is made on the basis of qualitative analysis and on relevant qualitative data. The analysis is carried out through a process of distinguishing between information and validated facts. Information can be both quantitative and qualitative, but both types are of equal importance, as long as they apply in order to display quality of the examined activity.

The obtained information is evaluated as to whether it is real and valid, and whether it can be transformed into evidenced facts. The facts should certainly differ from the information. The treated information can become fact only if it is associated with a defined criterion by which the procedure of self-evaluation provides conclusions, including what is not good in the application of the curriculum at the Military Academy and what can be improved or what needs to be changed.

Self-evaluation reports are complemented and integrated on the level of the overall educational system in the institution. They contain suggestions and conclusions in a way that contributes to improvement of the educational system as a whole. They also contribute to the promotion of educational activity, design of systems for studying and support decisions brought for educational improvement.¹³

Conclusions or decisions brought are on the basis of facts that should be clear. If brought decisions are implicit, non-precise and unclear and if they don't give recommendations for improvement than they are not useful for self-evaluation and they are excluded from the preparation of the report.

The final self-evaluation report is an important document because its content enables the organization to receive important information about its work. It is also the basis and support for further strategic decisions.

With the process of self-evaluation, the vision of the Military Academy is analyzed through posed aims and assesses whether they are in line with best practice in relation to the field of security, education and and more broadly, within the Republic of Macedonia and world wide. The results of the analysis are taken as a starting point in the assessment of the Strategy of the Military Academy and as a basis for verifying whether the strategy is appropriate for realizing the vision and aims of the Military Academy.

In the contemporary turbulent conditions of higher educational activity, knowledge is a source of development and is one of the fundamental factors of the comparative advantage of higher education institutions. The Self-evaluation process consists of the evaluation of available knowledge its adequate use in a higher educational institution is subject to implementation by management. They should and do have the task of attracting, maintaining and continually increasing the possibilities of intellectual capital and within the institution to provide a climate in which innovation and creativity come to the fore.

¹³ Kump, Mihevc S. in B., (2004), *Institucionalne in programske samoevalvacije v visokem šolstvu*, str.9-10, available at: <http://www.uni-mb.si/dokument.aspx?id=9760>, преземено на 03.04.2014.

SELF-EVALUATION CYCLE

According to the time and manner of implementation, self-evaluation can be divided according to different criteria. It can be said that self-evaluation is for the entire period of implementation of some interventions, but this is the case only if the term defines a set of evaluations of all kinds of assessments conducted at different times depending on the life cycle of the intervention or programme. Accordingly, the division depending on the time horizon is one of the most important, even the most important division, and depending on what point or level the intervention is performed for each evaluation, there are three types, i.e., evaluation processes in the self-evaluation cycle: pre or ex ante, interim or mid-term and consistent or ex-post evaluation. They all create the self-evaluation cycle.

The Self-evaluation cycle, as a sequence of overlapping programme cycles, is subject to potential duplication of certain tasks and therefore there is a need for caution and efficiency during planning of their implementation in order to avoid repetition of tasks. Therefore, during planning of interventions to sequential programme periods, the conclusions of recent evaluations are used as evaluation of appropriateness of the proposed activity for the following programme period. Figure 2 shows the interdependence of results of certain types of evaluation that were implemented in different phases of consequential programme periods.

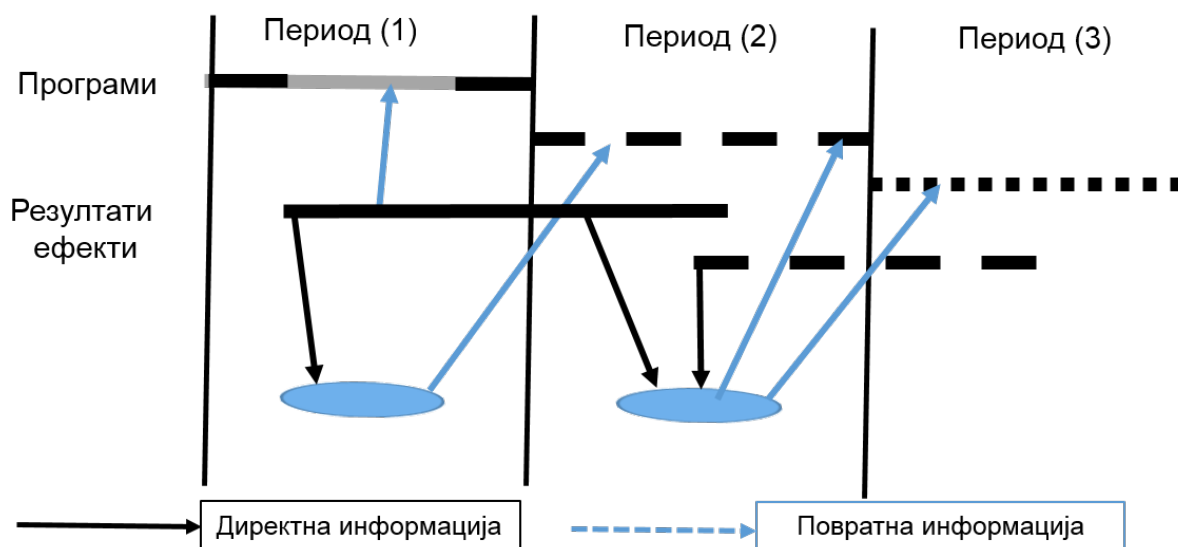


Figure 2: The role of self-evaluation in the sequence cycles of programming of teaching

The figure also shows that the previous evaluation, for the next programming period, takes into account the results of the work already done in the context of the current period. Namely, it is a medium-term evaluation of the programme, which includes the conclusions of the previous activities of the programming period. The latest information and results obtained in the monitoring process can also be included. By the evaluation of the previous programming period, the impact of previous interventions can be determined and analyzed, and we can consider which were similar to the planned and implemented in similar conditions.

Having in mind the fact that the main task of the midterm evaluation is to determine whether the objectives are still relevant and whether it is still possible to achieve the goal in the given period, the information collected during the monitoring process is widely used. In order to draw conclusions obtained by the preliminary assessment of the current programming period, the interim evaluation must assess the current situation so as to determine whether, as a result of the change, there has been a significant impact on the relevance and achievement of objectives.

In Ex-post evaluation of the programming period, the conclusions relating to specific areas of interventions serve as a reference for drawing conclusions regarding the current situation. Ex-post evaluation is used for identification and analysis of the facts and received effects of interventions. In addition to this type of evaluation, information available before the evaluation is included and in order to verify the achievement of the initially defined objectives and the interim evaluation of the current period in order to identify weaknesses and problems in implementing the programme, it also takes into account the current period.

INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

Contemporary business operation in all spheres of existence pays more attention to development and application of intellectual capital such as the non-material part from the total capital of the educational institution. The expression intellectual capital is defined and interpreted differently. Intellectual capital is “a sum of knowledge of all employees in the educational institution, but knowledge that contributes to the competitive knowledge of the market”, “knowledge that can be converted into value”, “intellectual potential that can be used for creation of welfare”, “power of collective mind”.¹⁴ Specifics of this kind of capital, in comparison to the others, are that there is no need of reserves of knowledge, but greater productive knowledge that creates added value.

Intellectual capital is a relatively new, complex economic category that represents all factors of operation that are not explicitly expressed in traditional self-evaluation reports, but create added value in higher educational institutions and have significant influence on the realization of long term plans and competitiveness of the same.¹⁵

The notion intellectual capital understands application of knowledge in the process of teaching and in other creative duties. It expresses the ability of the intangible to transfer knowledge into product that

¹⁴ Haljilji B, (2012), Intelektualni kapital kao determinanta kreiranja vrednosti I konkurentske prednosti kompanija, *Socioeconomica – The Scientific Journal for Theory and Practice of Socioeconomic Development*, Vol. 1, N° 2, pp. 305.

¹⁵ Sundać, D., Švast, N., (2009) Intelektualni capital temeljni čimbenik konkurentnosti poduzeća, *Ministarstvo gospodarstva, rada i poduzetništva, Zagreb*,. str. 27 .

brings value. A definition that is commonly expressed is “Intellectual property is something that can’t be materially determined but it can make you rich and can bring you competitive advantage“.¹⁶

Intellectual capital and non-material ownership stress that new value and competitive advantage are created to encourage the flow of knowledge in the educational institution and transformation of that knowledge into forms of relation capital, human capital and structural capital – constituent elements of intellectual capital, i.e. creation of synergy of components of intellectual capital. From the above, it follows that intellectual capital represents a combination of human and structural capital in which knowledge and abstract goods are transferred into sources of wealth via increasing human capital on the account of structural capital.¹⁷

The main characteristic of intellectual capital is recognizable in the form of knowledge which challenges academic managers to find techniques for its measurement and evaluation. The challenge consists of the implementation of measurement techniques and tools for evaluation of invisible property of a higher educational institution. The creation of a process of self-evaluation for assessment of intellectual capital in essence presents management with knowledge for applying the evaluation of a higher educational institution or its organizational units. Knowledge as a newly created value expressed through intellectual capital gains recognizable economic shape which represents preconditions for educational, economic, technological and other kind of progress. Knowledge as newly created value represents a main and recognizable characteristic of the economy of knowledge. The creation of values points to the fact that for the contemporary higher educational institution, the most important factor is the ability of employees to create value, rather than being an issue of finance and physical property. This imposes the need of changing the way of thinking of managerial teams in terms of prejudging the implementation of intellectual capital in relation to the accounting of numerical reports and cadastre certificates. It is an obligation of managerial teams to give economic shape to knowledge and to transfer it into intellectual capital, thus creating conditions for synergy between capacities and possibilities of information-communication technology and creativity, innovation and ability of the academic staff.

Capitalized knowledge gives economic validation of the knowledge represented through intellectual capital by which the value of knowledge is expressed more as a result of greater dependence of the educational institution from non-material assets.¹⁸ Even more, intellectual capital represents a summary of the overall knowledge of the academic staff which gives competitive advantage to the market: innovation, teaching processes, managerial habits, technologies, experience, information for students etc. Altogether, this knowledge composes the intellectual capital and as such is introduced in management

¹⁶ Haljilji B, (2012), *Intelektualni kapital kao determinanta kreiranja vrednosti I konkurentske prednosti kompanija*, Socioeconomica – The Scientific Journal for Theory and Practice of Socioeconomic Development, Vol. 1, N° 2, pp. 305.

¹⁷ Edvinsson, L., (2003) "Korporacijska longituda.- Navigacija ekonomijom znanja", Differo, Zagreb, str. 35.

¹⁸ Trifkovic S. (2007), *Intelektualna svojina*, Istrazivacko-izdavacki Centar, Beograd, crp. 10.

agendas.¹⁹ Structural knowledge and abilities represent intellectual potentials which the educational institution has at its disposal and which by the creation of added values (capitalization) can be easily recognizable in the competitive environment. This is due to the fact that intellectual capital is the most important and is the most developmentally stimulated.

Intellectual capital is broken down into three components: human capital, structural capital and relational (social) capital²⁰. The undefined conditional limits between the main components lead to the conclusion that intellectual capital is part of the total capital of the educational institution, expressed through the non-material part that cannot be easily accessed and managed.

Individual competencies described with human capital are education, knowledge, habits, communication, creativity, moral values, leadership abilities, motivation and other personal traits which contribute to the creation of personal, social and economic welfare. The second component of intellectual capital, structural capital, is in support of human capital and contributes to its implication in the educational process through internal structure such as organizational structure and culture. The overall value of the intellectual capital is gained with the third constituent element that joins the two above stated components. It does this through relation (social) capital or external structure that is being built on the basis of cooperation between universities, exchange of knowledge, establishment of brand.

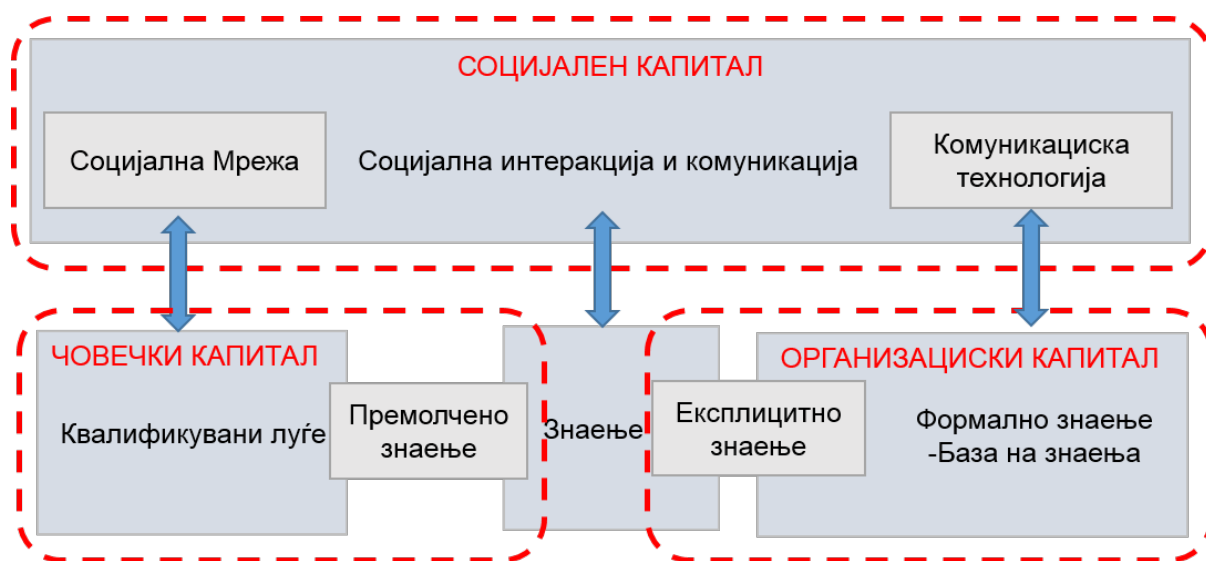


Figure 3: Concept of intellectual capital

Application of knowledge, data processing and generating new data, designing plans and programmes, development of strategies, decision-making, application of experiences, establishing norms of behavior are all processes through which value is being learned and developed (i.e. intellectual property that belongs to the educational institution by which it is characterised).

¹⁹ Stewart T. (1991), *Brainpower, Fortune*, стр. 36.

²⁰ Миленковски Б. (2013), *Интелектуален капитал и управување со знаење, Хоризонти*, Универзитет „Св.Климент Охридски“, општествени и хуманистички науки, Битола, година IX, број 9, стр.62-63.

The combination of intellectual resources determines specific characteristics of a higher educational institution and the classification of intellectual capital that highlights differentiation and uniqueness of that institution. This is also needed. In the period when knowledge is an engine of corporate development and long term competitiveness, the biggest challenges in the current educational process are clear - defining, measurement, promotion and evaluation of knowledge and its economically relevant notional form, intellectual capital. Intellectual capital is knowledge, information, intellectual property and the experience of employees that they turn into market value: everything that can be used in order to create an advantage.

Usage of intellectual resources (such as knowledge of staff, curricula knowledge and educational processes) transforms them in a certain value that builds competitive advantage. Having in mind that in the economy of knowledge, intellectual resources are an important factor of growth and sustainable competitive advantage of a higher education institution, it is clear why effective and efficient management of knowledge its relevant notional form, intellectual capital, represents a pre-condition for successful operation.

CONCLUSION

Quality assurance is the key factor for success in every educational institution. Self-evaluation is the key and basic factor for verifying and maintaining the quality of an educational cycle. It enables us to recognize our own weaknesses. Results are used to find appropriate measures by promoting of discussion amongst employees, leaders and students. Weak points, the areas on which we should pay more attention and areas in which we are already successful and need upgrading, are identified by self-evaluation.

Self-evaluation is in support of the process of decision making through ensuring necessary data for appropriate allocation of resources and decreasing of expenditure. Its aim is to evaluate the needed intervention from the perspective of defining aims, technical implementation, financial implications and required time frame. From the managerial point of view, success is evidenced by reaching proposed targets, influence and contribution of overall aims and the longer term sustainability of the achieved results.

In principle it can be said that the results from self-evaluation are used in finding and identifying positive and negative experiences and knowledge acquired through feedback. The justification for using self-evaluation as a tool for increasing efficiency of resource use in a higher educational institution exceeds the drawbacks, especially for business decisions, approving curricula, decisions for financial construction or bringing investment decisions.

The effects of globalization, directly or indirectly, positively or negatively, influence the process of education. They impose new needs and standards and a different understanding of pre-existing interaction in general, among subjects in the educational process. In that direction, self-evaluation in the

real meaning of the word and its function assists at checking of efficiency of the educational institution and gives the best possible alternative solutions. With its findings, self-evaluation provides information that is needed for possible decision making. This is in order to take corrective measures (logical interventions and hierarchy of aims), that provide support for efficiency while implementing study programmes and assuring the long term stability of achieved results. In that way, it helps with future interventions for improving the implementation of teaching-scientific programmes in the institution.

Applied strategy unambiguously presents the vision of a higher education institution. This means that by fulfilling institutional aims, knowledge is developed which, in the contemporary social and economic conditions, is represented through intellectual capital. Generating intellectual capital represents scientific, educational, economic, technological and every other kind of progress recognizable as newly created value with specific characteristics for the economy of knowledge. The development of values with increased participation and knowledge imposes the need for the management of intellectual capital and continuous investment in the same. Undoubtedly, intellectual capital is a unique economic category that represents key material and non-material factors for reaching and maintaining sustainable development and competitiveness in the twenty-first century. Those factors are the result of the creative application of knowledge (usage of knowledge in the creation of new values). The conclusion is that intellectual capital should be part of the process of self-evaluation in higher educational institutions for obtaining completely relevant indicators.

In the context of the above is the saying of Marcel Proust, (1871-1922), French novelist, critic, essayist who says that, “ The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes “, which gives us the right to consider intellectual capital as a basic value in the self-evaluation process.

Bibliography

1. Andriessen D. (2004), Making Sense of INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL: Designing a Method for the Valuation of Intangibles, Elsevier, Inc., UK.
2. Daft L.R. (2008), New Era of Management, Second Edition, Thomson South-Western.
3. Ефтимоски Д. (2009), Економски раст, ФАМИС, Битола.
4. Lešnik M., Bergant K.in K., (2001), Samoevalvacija v vzgojno izobraževalnih ustanovah. Inštitut za psihologijo osebnosti, Ljubljana.
5. Мурати Ц. (2002), Дидактика, Чабеј, Тетово.
6. Национална програма за развој на образованието во Република Македонија 2005-2015, МОН, Скопје, 2005.
7. Stewart T. (1991), Brainpower, Fortune.
8. Trifkovic S. (2007), Intelektualna svojina, Demokratska stranka/Istrazivacko - izdavacki centar, Beograd.
9. Štrajn D., (2000), Evalvacija. Pedagoški inštitut, Ljubljana.
10. Kump, Mihevc S. in B., (2004), Institucionalne in programske samoevalvacije v visokem šolstvu, str.9-10, Достапно на: <http://www.uni-mb.si/dokument.aspx?id=9760>, преземено на 03.04.2014.
11. <https://managementmania.com/en/intellectual-capital>.