ISSN 2029-9575 (PRINT)
ISSN 2538-7200 (ONLINE)
QUALITY ISSUES
AND INSIGHTS
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 5, No. 1, 2016

THE QUALITY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Vincentas Lamanauskas
Šiauliai University, Lithuania
E-mail: v.lamanauskas@ef.su.lt

It is undoubted, that study quality is one of the essential university activity priorities. After 2000, higher education sector in Lithuania has significantly expanded, the number of students has been increasing, over eight hundred study programmes have been accredited. Quantitative higher education system development actualises a high study quality demand. However, demand clarity and perception is only one side. Study quality assurance becomes a highly important question.

It is also obvious that one of the complex study quality parts is student scientific research activity (SRA) quality. It is understandable, that SRA should be universally stimulated and developed. Scientific research activity is not an entertainment, but responsible, thorough work requiring a lot of self-reliance. During such an activity students' analytical thinking gets stronger, the abilities of searching for information and using it are formed; they learn how to analyse the gathered material, to prepare reports, to make research presentations and so on (Lamanauskas, Augienė, 2015). Scientific research activity process forms conditions for students to master researcher's role at a certain level, to develop certain competencies.

The aim exposed here is not to exhaustively analyse students' SRA peculiarities. It is sought to draw attention to SRA quality. Speaking about university studies it is understandable, that first of all study stages are distinguished – the first (bachelor's degree) and the second (master's degree). Very often during the master's degree studies it becomes clear, that students do not have sufficient scientific research abilities. Part of education gaps remain after bachelor's degree studies. One can assert, that during bachelor's degree studies much more attention should be paid to SRA. Science knowledge becomes full of sense only applying it in life (in real, practical activity). Part of the knowledge is used for science knowledge accumulation, for the development of cognition on the whole, and the other is usually applied in practical activity. Therefore, it is very important, that during bachelor's degree studies research result significance is revealed and their possible use/application in social environment. Major scientific research activity components during bachelor's degree studies are:

- Scientific research activity integrated in the study module content (various tasks, laboratory-practical works and other). It is understandable, that a concrete study programme contains various modules, their possibilities for SRA development are various. It is noticed, that quite often these possibilities are insufficiently used. E.g., research show that the majority of the students did not participate in research activities (Ertug, Önal, 2014).
- Independent student SRA. This is, participation in seminars, student scientific conferences, non-governmental organisation activity, various contests and so on. Such activities depend not only on the student himself, but also on certain motivation, encouragement from the lecturers' side, on the whole, on a suitable study and academic atmosphere at university.
- Student scientific practice (internship). Not only practice content is important, but also such practice quality. Student scientific quality is understood as a consecutive bachelor's study programme, student together with university scientists and lecturers performed scientific research activity. Student's scientific practice leader is appointed, programme is arranged, account methods for the performed practice and its assessment ways are foreseen. E.g., in Šiauliai university Faculty of Education student scientific practice is regulated. For the student, having performed SRP three and more times during the study years, in the diploma supplement it is inscribed about participation in scientific activity and about the acquired researcher competencies. It is important to pay attention, that such practice is voluntary and not compulsory for all students (according to the presented Lithuanian university example). On the other hand, the abovementioned

ISSN 2029-9575 (PRINT)
ISSN 2538-7200 (ONLINE)
QUALITY ISSUES
AND INSIGHTS
IN THE 21st CENTURY
Vol. 5, No. 1, 2016

practice regulations basically do not define practice quality assessment criteria.

- Bachelor's Thesis. This is one of the most important student's works, when a student proves his preparation. It is independent basic university first stage study final work, on the basis of which student's ability is evaluated to apply the obtained theoretical knowledge during the studies independently solving concrete problematic questions according the study field. Also, preparation for independent work in practical activity and for further master's degree studies is assessed.

The most important SRA components were mentioned. To evaluate the quality of each is a complicated task. Lecturers receive a significant role. Lecturer not only carries out educational activity (though quite often part of the lecturers' activity is only of this kind). The lecturer's scientific research activity comprises scientific knowledge creation, accumulation, application in the study process, educational practice improvement and so on. More often it is encouraged, that lecturers carry out SRA activity involving students into it. The research show, that lecturers' scientific research activity can assure study quality (Kreber, 2000). It is also undoubted, that research-based academic studies allow students developing research-related capabilities by promoting critical scientific thinking, solution of problems and use other analytic strategies and technical tools (Fernate, Surikova, Kalnina, Sanchez Romero, 2009). There also exists a certain conflict between lecturers-researchers and students. In this sense, the question arises how to match scientific-research activity with educational activity. In other words, how to coordinate research and teaching links. As S. Karagiannis (2009) states, linking science research and teaching may be a crucial aspect of academic and scientist contribution to society.

It is obvious that student SRA quality sphere remains important. Such activity development is one of priority science management spheres. It is necessary to form open to interdisciplinary research and critically thinking specialists, to educate young man's scientific interests, finally to encourage to choose researcher's career. As A. Brew (2007) notices, "research and inquiry is not just for those who choose to pursue an academic career. It is central to professional life in the twenty-first century" (Brew 2007, p.7). On the other hand, the relationship between research and undergraduate education in higher education has long been problematic (Willison, O`Regan, 2007) and further remains problematic. Scientific research activity quality is necessary, regardless, that not all university study participants consider it priority. Understanding about SRA quality content is still superficial.

References

Brew, A. (2007). *Research and teaching from the students' perspective. International policies and practices for academic enquiry: An international colloquium held at Marwell conference centre*, Winchester, UK, 19–21 April.

Ertug, N, Önal, H. (2014). Undergraduate nursing students' research activities and utilization: A Turkish sample. *Aquichan*, *14* (2), 251-260.

Fernate, A., Surikova, S., Kalnina, D., Sanchez Romero, C. (2009). Research-based academic studies: Promotion of the quality of learning outcomes in higher education? *Education-Line*, 1-23. Retrieved from http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/187885.pdf.

Karagiannis, S. (2009). The conflicts between science research and teaching in higher education: An academic's perspective. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, *21* (1), 75-83.

Kreber, C. (2000). Integrating teaching with other aspects of professioral work: A comparison of experienced and inexperienced faculty's role conceptualizations. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, *3*, 79-112.

Lamanauskas, V., Augienė, D. (2015). Development of scientific research activity in university: A position of the experts. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *167*, 131-140. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.12.654.

Willison, J., O`Regan, K. (2007). Commonly known, commonly not known, totally unknown: A framework for students becoming researchers. *Higher Education Research & Development, 26* (4), 393-409.

Received: *December 16, 2016* Accepted: *December 27, 2016*

Vincentas Lamanauskas PhD., (HP) Professor, Department of Education & Psychology, University of Šiauliai, 25 P. Višinskio Street, LT-76351 Šiauliai, Lithuania.
E-mail: v.lamanauskas@ef.su.lt
Website: http://lamanauskas.puslapiai.lt
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Vincentas_Lamanauskas