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К ВОПРОСУ О ЗАПАДНОМ ОПЫТЕ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ НАУЧНО-ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ СТУДЕНТОВ И ВОЗМОЖНОСТЯХ ЕЕ УЛУЧШЕНИЯ В БАЙКАЛЬСКОМ ГОСУЛАРСТВЕННОМ УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕ

АННОТАЦИЯ. Целью данной статьи является выявление основных недостатков существующей системы организации научно-исследовательской деятельности студентов в российских университетах. Для достижения цели авторы статьи проводят анализ ценного западного опыта, освещая содержательную часть курса по организации научных исследований в некоторых американских университетах, а также рассматривают наиболее ключевые несовершенства существующих исследовательских курсов в отечественных университетах и предлагают некоторые практические решения для улучшения ситуации. В фокус данной работы входит анализ основных характерных особенностей американского подхода к формированию содержания курсов по методам научного исследования для магистерских программ, описывается их структура, основные требования, практически-ориентированный характер заданий и другие аспекты. Также статья предлагает детальный анализ формата организации научно-исследовательской деятельности на начальных этапах обучения в российских вузах, проводится оценка его основных характеристик и трудностей. По мнению авторов статьи, главная трудность, с которой сталкиваются преподаватели, это отсутствие специального курса по основам научных исследований в программах бакалавриата и специалитета российских университетов при обязательном написании курсовых и дипломных работ, что является серьезным противоречием, требующим решений. Авторы статьи считают, что введение специального исследовательского курса поможет обеспечить усвоение студентами основ научно-исследовательской деятельности на начальных и средних этапах обучения. Предлагается внедрение данного курса в Байкальском государственном университете для улучшения качества написания исследовательских курсовых и выпускных квалификационных работ.вщиков сырья, но и уникальных геоэкономических и геополитических территорий.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА. Курс по основам научных исследований, методология исследований, научно-исследовательская деятельность, организация научных исследований в вузе, научно-исследовательское взаимодействие, современные способы коммуникации.

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ON WESTERN EXPERIENCE OF STUDENT RESEARCH ACTIVITY ORGANIZATION AND ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT AT BAIKAL STATE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT. The purpose of this paper is to define main disadvantages of current system of research activity at Russian universities, on the basis of analyzing valu-

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able western experience, highlighting the research course content at American universities, as well as considering the biggest drawbacks of national university courses and propose some practical solutions. This paper examines main features of American-based Research Methods courses taught at graduate level, by analyzing their structure, requirements, practice-based assignments, and other aspects. We also provide in-depth analysis of how student research activity is organized within undergraduate system of Russian education, by assessing its main characteristics and challenges. We demonstrate that the main challenge faced by Russian educators is that undergraduate (bachelor / specialist) programs at Russian universities do not provide any core curriculum Research Methods courses while having research paper as the main graduation requirement. We argue that early-on introduction of a specially designated research design course will be to a great advantage for our students as it will establish solid foundation for student research work at sophomore and senior levels. Therefore, we recommend that a basic Research Methods course should be included as a required course at Baikal State University for the majors with term research projects and final graduation research papers.

KEYWORDS. Research methods course, research methodology, research activity, scientific and research interaction, modern communication technologies.

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One of the most interesting topics for educators and professional scientists is how to bring up and nurture successful academics. This is where academic experience of our western colleagues could be found beneficial. Western education institutions are well known for their ability to turn former college graduates into highly-driven and well educated graduate students with good rates of completing MA degrees and going into PhD programs. The fundamental question here is how they train, prepare and educate future professionals and scientists. What is this absolutely essential part of education program and system in general where research expertise is passed on from one generation of scholars to the next?

The first part of the article examines main characteristics of the research method courses taught at two American graduate programs: Master of Arts program at School of Journalism, Ball State University, Indiana and Doctorate program in Mass Communications at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, USA. The reason why American education experience has been chosen for the analysis and comparison with Russian approach to undergraduate research is that one of the authors of the article was a graduate and later a PhD student at those universities. Thus, all the analysis, discussion and evaluation of the courses is based entirely on the personal experience and insight of the American education system.

Considering the limits of the discussion that we may have here we will concentrate on some most significant stages and aspects of Research Design course that help establish strong foundation for students' research.

1. Content of the Research Method course

Most of the research methods courses at graduate and postgraduate level cover basic components of research practice, with an emphasis on how to use a variety of methodological approaches to design studies relevant to the field of studies. In general, these are the main areas covered in the courses: basic research designs (specific to the filed of studies): exploratory, survey, experimental, content and secondary analysis; basics of statistical analysis (measures of central tendency, contingency analysis, correlation analysis). Graduate school programs provide basic research methods course every semester, including summer, and usually rotate those focusing on experimental, survey, content analysis or other topics [1; 2].

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2. Course learning objectives

Research Methods courses have certain learning objectives among those could be: understand key research methods in the field of studies that are particularly meaningful to them and their areas of interest, demonstrate knowledge of research methods terms and concepts used in applied and theoretical studies, develop ability to identify, describe and critically evaluate advantages and disadvantages of selected quantitative and qualitative research methods, use appropriate statistical techniques to summarize, analyze and interpret research questions and hypotheses, apply a research method to current research problem [3].

3. Course requirements

Most of the Research Method courses taught at American universities are seminar courses. Therefore, students are required to be prepared for class discussion by keeping up-to-date with the readings, preparing class discussion materials and presenting material for the class. In addition, they have to submit written assignments, exams and a research paper. The students are expected to read an array of research works, theoretical papers and current academic research papers. They are expected to actively participate in class discussion, group projects and class presentations. Since a basic Research Method course is a semester long students are expected to cover a lot of material so it is usually an intensive course. After completing basic Research Design (or Research Methods course) students can choose other Research Design courses focusing on a different research methodology in depth.

4. Course assignments

Majority of the courses on research design include readings, discussion, class presentations and research proposal as their assignments. The time limit of one semester does not allow students to actually conduct a study, analyze it, and write up in a paper but it does provide students with an opportunity to write a mini research proposal. Research proposal is the first fundamental step in the research design, which ensures the future success of the entire process.

In general, students are expected to (1) clearly identify a research problem, (2) provide a problem background statement, (3) identify major relevant research related to the problem, (4) identify the independent and dependent variables for the study, (5) provide the operational definition for each variable, (6) state the research questions / hypotheses, (7) identify and justify the sampling design (and all relevant issues), (8) compare and contrast other studies using the same research method and include the actual instrument (survey questionnaire, code sheet for content analysis, stimulus material for experiment, etc.), (9) identify and justify the statistical design and (10) provide the author's opinion of the expected outcomes for the study [2]. At the end of the course students submit their proposals and do class presentation.

5. Personal experience

After discussing main features of the Research Design course in general I would like to highlight some practical aspects of the course that I personally found very useful and effective for myself as a researcher.

One of the things that the research methods course teaches students is how to define their research project. Students are encouraged to answer what, why, who, why, where, and when questions regarding their potential project. Students have to summarize their "what is your research" in one sentence, if they fail to do so research topic is too broad, vague and needs to be fine-tuning. The question of "who will be

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the participants" is addressed in the case of sociological, psychological or medical research. Regardless, students should be able to specify the exact material (what) to be examined. The same rationale applies to questions about 'where and when".

During the first stage of the research project development students have an opportunity to analyze different research statements trying to critique and find flaws. For example, students may be given the following research statement: "Research aims to find out what people think about TV". The potential analysis / discussion of this statement could be the following: the proposed project is vague and too broad. The questions are to be addressed what kind of people and what television? The way the research statement is at the moment is very general and it will be almost impossible to examine "all people" and "all television". It is not uncommon for students to have this type of research statements and teacher could help bring focus and more definition. For example, a student could investigate children's programming and find out what teachers think about its quality and value. Or student could ask his classmates to keep a diary of their viewing patterns and discuss it in the focus group. Bringing focus in a research statement is absolutely necessary for a successful and manageable research project and this is the first major step in learning process [4].

At this stage of research project development students also learn the importance of reviewing the current thinking in a field. It is not uncommon that students rush with this part of the process wanting to start immediately and fail in the end. It is important to demonstrate the significance of conducting a rigorous review of the field (literature review), which will help identify gaps in current knowledge base, avoid doing the same study again and make the same mistakes. Students are expected to identify other people working in the area, key works and opposing views. As a result of conducting a comprehensive literature review students should be able to identify and formulate a research problem, research variables and construct research questions.

During the second stage of the research process students have to master and understand the subject of research methodology, which is the general principle of the research. At this phase students acquire basic knowledge about qualitative and quantitative research and which would be the most appropriate to use in answering their questions. For example, if students are trying to address the issue of cause and effect such as which medical treatment is most effective, or what reduces certain symptoms they should choose an experiment. This method allows students to test the hypothesis and actually proves if a certain treatment leads to a particular outcome. If students are interested in what people think, depending on the amount of participants, they would have to choose a survey methodology or a focus group. If students do not realize what methods will help them answer their research questions they will most likely choose the wrong methods and discover nothing. It is impossible to establish the cause and effect by asking questions like in an interview, as well as it is impossible to discover opinions and attitudes by conducting an experiment. Research methods are the tools we use to collect data and it is paramount to choose the correct and appropriate research tools. Teaching this is one of the main goals of a Research Design course [5].

A big part of the course is dedicated to different research designs, which could be longitudinal, cross-sectional, historical, experimental and non-experimental. Students do various activities to learn how to select the research designs. For example, they could be given a research statement and have to identify the design used in the research study and support their argument. "If you were to test a group of women to assess coping strategies in their workplace in 2000 again the same group in 2010 and again in 2020, this is an example of ______." Or "The speech problem of hearing impaired child in school, this is an example of ______." [3]

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Students are taught to think about the purpose of the research as this will also help select the most appropriate method. In quantitative research, methods are defined early in the planning stage. They have to be finalized and fine-tuned before students start collecting the data. For example, if a student chooses a content analysis and does not have a well-developed coding sheet with all the operational definitions of the variables he will end up collecting the wrong data, miscoding certain variables, getting inconsistent results and eventually throwing the study in the bin. Or imagine students are creating a mock-up website to study how participants navigate the pages. If some pages do not look authentic, participants will treat this experimental stimulus as fake and will provide unreliable answers, which will compromise the study and generate false results.

These are just some of the few practical aspects of the Research Design course that I found useful in developing my own understanding of the research process as a whole, as well as advantages and disadvantages of selected quantitative and qualitative research methods, use of appropriate statistical techniques to summarize, analyze and interpret research questions and hypotheses. Those are the fundamental pieces of the research design, which are absolutely essential in developing a successful research project, whether theoretical or practical. From my personal experience I believe a course similar to Research Design could be very beneficial for our students as well.

6. On structure of research activity at Russian universities and its participants

The research activity at Russian universities, we are planning to consider here, is related to the one that is preceded to the main traditional scientific-research process, which is carried out by postgraduate schools, it is quite restricted and organized and supposed to result in writing, completing and defending a candidate (PhD) thesis. This part of the article focuses on the undergraduate stage of research activities (at bachelor and specialist courses), that is not so well-structured and well-organized as the one at post-graduate course, but is definitely of no less importance.

The purpose of this part of the paper is to analyze student research activity at undergraduate programs in Russian universities; understand its structure, aspects, and main challenges; discuss ways of how to improve research activity at undergraduate level by introducing first-year students to properly structured academic research activities.

When we examine the structure and main participants of scientific-research activity, typical for most Russian universities, it is necessary to consider its close relations with different social groups and communities that pursue their own goals and objectives. Many modern scholars underlined the importance of the social aspect of scientific research. For instance, N. Barebina made an emphasis on the special role of scientific community and research activity as a social institution, as well as on the necessity of working out specific social parameters of science [6; 7].

Considering the social aspect of research activity, it is important to examine the roles of the participants or social parties of scientific-research activity within the framework of Russian higher education institutions. The student research activity usually involves writing course papers, graduation research papers, publishing articles and conference reports. The primary participants of research activities are:

- junior university researchers: bachelor and specialist students, independent researchers, who are supposed to generate new ideas and carry out research;

- research supervisors, faculty members, tutors, coauthors, whose main functions are to serve as student resource broker within the university community, help students to develop research plan, monitor and control student's research activity progress;

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- expert community representatives, that are supposed to ensure and control the quality of scientific-research works, which include:

a) expert councils at scientific magazines, journals, conferences;

b) external reviewers and opponents of research course papers and graduation papers, articles, thesis;

c) national plagiarism search engines "ANTIPLAGIAT" [https://text.ru/antiplagiat].

7. Effective communication as a prerequisite for successful research activity at universities

Based on the conditions described above, we argue that academic research process involving various participants at different levels needs to be facilitated by effective and robust communication between all parties. These communication components determine and ensure the quality of the expected research activity. Communication in research sphere has many important objectives, for example as some scholars suppose, the main point of scientific communication is information exchange [7, p. 238].

No doubt, science communication is facilitated by language means and forms. Language plays a vital role in presenting and communicating science. Science communication may generate support for scientific research and ensure the existence of scientific and research sphere in the first place. According to modern socio-linguistic approaches to language, the former is considered to be the main environment of human interactions in any social sphere. Some scholars see societies as living systems, existing in the niche of linguistic interactions [8, p. 363].

Thus, deep language dependence in professional scientific and research communication determines and directly relates the degree of participant's skill for doing language interactions to the success of his / her research activity.

In addition to instrumental function language fulfills by "serving" science and its needs, language interaction in scientific sphere creates its own field of research in different fields of science, for example in linguistics. "Language interactions within the frameworks of scientific community activities present the field for problem analysis" [6, p. 19].

At every stage of this process, or more specifically, while a researcher interacts with other participants, the quality of communication (availability and accessibility of contact, promptness of getting a feedback, as well as accuracy and volume of information transmitted) definitely has an impact on communication outcome.

8. On modern trends in facilitating research activities in educational institutions

According to current views, modern research trends are mainly the ones related to new forms of communication technology, that are believed to improve and enhance the process of human interaction. Baikal State University has successfully implemented the system of innovative technologies for improving research activity at university and its standardization at higher educational institution [9, p. 173]. Owing to the latest technological innovations and breakthroughs in communication technology, research activity participants are able to use more effective and robust means of communication.

Nowadays there are multiple forms and methods of technology-mediated communication widely used by researchers: 1) electronic mail for sending / receiving letters and text files; 2) Internet platforms for on-line live communication in video-conferencing and consultations (Zoom, Skype, Discord); 3) search engines for collecting, selecting and processing data / information; 4) Big Data Bases (British National Corpus, American National Corpus); 5) social networks and applications for exchang-

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ing messages (Twitter, Telegram); 6) programs for making presentations, graphs and tables (Power Point, Excel); 7) researchers' professional forums where people can share opinions, discuss different topics, publications and announce incoming events and many others.

Undoubtedly, research field is greatly affected by modern communication technologies. Emerging information and communication technologies offer multiple advantages with respect to other technologies by improving communication between scholars and other interested parties. In particular, they reduce time for exchanging information, save labor inputs, minimize efforts for getting a feedback and discussing topics, increase quality and quantity of contacts or consultations, relieve from necessity of physical presence while consulting, and bring other positive moments. Effective communication in research process is essential for student success. Research is the ongoing process, in which students, in consultation with the research paper supervisor, plan their research and carry it out in close contact with a supervisor. It implies regular visits and close interaction between two participants of the research process. Computer-mediated communication positively affects research processes, problem solving, writing, decision-making, argumentation, and overall quality of scientific and research process and its result.

But despite all these advantages, modern communication technologies have not significantly changed students' attitude to research and their ability to conduct research. Abundant technological presence and its various formats speed up the process of exchanging information, making interaction faster and easier, but neither improve the quality of research works nor enhance research interaction. The big paradox of "information era" is that information is perceived as "low cost", marking the simplicity of information extraction that makes the real independent knowledge to be "more valuable and more expensive".

Availability and accessibility of online resources hinders students' performance and decision-making processes, especially when they have to plan research process on their own. Without proper guidance information available online decreases students imagination, creativity, curiosity, overall motivation; diminishes the value of reading and create big challenges students face when working with large volumes of data. Modern scholars point out students' lack of analytical skills, literacy and motivation for reading, despite their technical and computer proficiency [8, p. 357].

Thus, considering all the arguments, the most important conditions for effective communication and productive interaction in the research sphere at undergraduate level include students' active participation in the research activity, students' clear understanding of the research goals, deep personal involvement, and genuine interest in successful completion of a research project.

9. On the need of introduction a research course at undergraduate level

Master's students at Baikal State University have enough opportunities to develop their research skills by taking special seminars and courses on scientific research [10, p. 150]. Some departments have a clear strategy, worked out for research and scientific activity at master's program, such as interdisciplinary approach of research activity at the department of psychology [11, p. 334].

Unlike Master's program, which offers "Research Methods" and other similar courses, undergraduate program lacks any formal way of training students in research, which creates a sense of lack of academic orientation and leads to students' academic underperformance. At the same time, there are several course papers bachelor / specialist students are required to write during the course of their studies, as well as a graduation research paper that undergraduates are expected to write with-

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out any proper formal training. Considering all the challenges junior researchers face it is reasonable to argue that students should take special research courses earlier in their academic career, particularly at bachelor / specialist programs of studies.

Since writing course papers and final research papers is an integral part of any curriculum at bachelor / specialist programs, the biggest pressure of organizing research process is usually put on a research supervisor. This person has to educate inexperienced students, compensate for lack of their skills and research experience, explain main procedures and requirements of a research process, motivate students to read academic literature, design a study, and do many other things within a constrained advisory framework. Generally, the completion of course / graduation research paper of a student solely depends on enthusiasm and patience of a research supervisor, his / her ability to organize systematic interaction with a student, as well as on his / her capability and possibility to cover an extensive theoretical material during several consultations.

In case the supervisor is not able to address all those challenges the process of writing a paper may get out of control. Student may stop conducting research altogether and opt for ready-made or commissioned course paper online. It is a flourishing business thanks to available technologies and Internet. In general, paper-writing companies and their services undermine the integrity of higher education.

It is quite clear, that it is necessary to offer formal research training to students earlier in their academic career, educating them about main characteristics of the research process. Otherwise, writing course papers and graduation research papers would remain a problem for bachelor / specialist students and lead to a proliferation of illegal academic ghostwriting.

Introduction of "Research Methods" course at undergraduate level may improve the situation at stake. This academic course can be a required course (basic component) or a course from an elective group (elective component), but it should be a part of the curriculum of those undergraduate programs that require course and graduation papers.

In order to change the existing unfavorable state of research activity at undergraduate level in general, and at Baikal State University in particular, we propose to introduce the course on research methods and research activity into the curriculum of some bachelor and specialist programs, for example into linguistic program.

The content of the "Research Methods" course may include the following topics:

- goals and objectives of research activity in general, as well as of research process in a particular professional sphere (for example in the professional activity of a future philologist, linguist-scholar or interpreter);

- modern research methods, including methods for philological research;

- features and requirements of research and scientific discourse (language style in research texts and publications), specific terminology;

- typical structure of a research paper (theoretical and practical aspects of research activity),

- technical standards, requirements for text format and presentation;

- research process, its stages and necessary organizational components (what to start with, how to collect and analyze data, the importance of timeline etc.);

- fulfillment of scientific expertise procedures, necessary for completing research work (national antiplagiarism search engine ANTIPLAGIAT);

- course paper / graduation thesis defense procedure.

In conclusion it is necessary to highlight that the existing format of research activity at our universities has some disadvantages, which prevent students from obtaining true motivation for research activity. Undergraduate curriculum needs to

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offer a special course on research methods that is supposed to compensate for the lack of knowledge and academic experience young researchers have, as well as improve interaction and communication between the participants of the research process.

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