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Role of Students and Supervisors' Interaction in Research Projects: Expectations and Evaluations

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Abstract

The success of research projects largely depends on the interaction of students and supervisors. Purposes of the study were to identify the students' expectations of interaction; and to compare the subjective supervisors' estimates of students' research abilities with students' research abilities measured by objective indicators. A sample consisted of students (bachelors, masters, graduates) and supervisors from different faculties of St.-Petersburg State University. The questionnaire; content analysis; psycho diagnostic techniques for studying students' intellectual abilities and research potential, and 10-point assessment scales for supervisors were used. Students' expectations from supervisors were described. It was shown that supervisors' evaluations were often inexact and correlated more with external indicators of research activity of students than with their intellectual capacities. Necessity of focused work to improve the accuracy of the mutual understanding of students and supervisors was substantiated.

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1. Introduction

In the last decade, many researchers in the field of educational psychology recognize the importance of the interaction of lecturers and students. The authors emphasize that modern teaching strategies are becoming increasingly oriented on students (Huba & Freed, 2000), students' involvement into the joint work with the lecturers contributes to the effectiveness of learning process (Frymier, 2005; Goodboy & Myers, 2008), and is positively correlated with higher academic achievement (Frisby & Myers, 2008).

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Consideration of students as active participants in the educational process caused the appearance of studies aimed at understanding of students' expectations and their perceptions of lecturers. Studies of the desired qualities of lecturers show that students prefer professors who throw an intellectual challenge to them, have the experience, and clearly explain not only the subject, but also how to achieve success in learning (Senko, Belmonte, & Yakhkind, 2012). Some researchers find out that students with a high level of satisfaction with training programs consider the ideal teacher to be able to adapt the learning content and arouse interest of students (Junquera, Mitre, & Perez, 2012). There are revealed differences in behavior of teachers-facilitators perceived by nursing students: they appreciate preceptors as more supportive while clinical lecturers are perceived as more important for development of critical thinking, reflection and exchange of experience between students (Kristofferzon, Mårtensson, Mamhidir, & Löfmark, 2013). It is essential that students were satisfied with all facilitators' supervision and their contribution to all learning outcomes. It means that students need different kinds of support from supervisors.

At the same time, the problem of supervisors' perception and evaluation of learning outcomes and capabilities of students is topical. Currently, psychologists agree that students' achievements are the result of systematic interactions between various cognitive and motivational variables (Sedaghat, Abedin, Hejazi, & Hassanabadi, 2011). The learning outcomes of students depend not only on their cognitive abilities and applied learning strategies, but also many motivational and personal factors, such as goals (motives) of students' learning activity (Elliott, 1999), students' perceived abilities (Green & Miller, 1996), individual difference in ego orientation (*desire for superiority*) and task orientation (*desire for understanding*) (Nicholls, Cheung, Lauer, & Patashnick, 1989), psychological sense of school membership (Ferreira, Cardoso, & Abrantes, 2011), and other various characteristics. And in turn, the development of students' skills in the creative and research projects improves their learning motivation and quality of work (Darinskaya, 2012).

The analysis of the scientific literature showed that students' expectations and issues of evaluating of students' achievements in traditional learning activity are mainly described. But an important role in modern education belongs to research activity and involvement of students in the joint research projects with supervisors.

The research activity differs from the traditional learning activity. It aims to get new scientific knowledge through finding and analysis of scientific information, formulation of research questions and hypotheses, data collection and processing, reflection and representation, etc (Poddyakov, 2000). We can assume that at every stage of research project students expect from supervisors certain types of support and incentives: motivation to begin the study, positive, but critical feedback, algorithms and explanation of research operations, and assistance in analysis and interpretation of the data, etc. The complexity of tasks and requirements for students increases on each subsequent stage of education (bachelor, master, graduate). Therefore, supervisors' evaluation of students' research capacities, including a whole range of motivational, cognitive, behavioral and self-organizational characteristics becomes very important. As all these characteristics may appear ambiguous or be only potential, a supervisor has to solve a very difficult problem. Underestimation or overestimation of research capacities of students by a supervisor could reduce the effectiveness of their interaction. For example, it was shown that character of motivation which encourages students to interact with lecturers could be ambiguous. Mottet, Martin, & Myers (1999) identified functional, social motives, motives of participation, "extenuating" and "slavish subservience" motives of students' communicative behavior, among which only a functional motive is directly related to the learning course. We found out that research activity of students, along with intrinsic motives, leading to high quality of work, can also be encouraged by students' values (Iskra & Moskvicheva, 2014), the motives of social achievements, personal development, and obligation, which stimulate them to look for easier ways of completing tasks (Moskvicheva, 2012).

Personality features of students could also be predictors of success of their researches. High level of research potential of students is positively correlated with extraversion, self-control, emotional stability, expressiveness, as well as the personality orientation to the future (Bordovskaia & Kostromina, 2013). Maturity of goal-setting processes, forecasting, self-reflection largely determines the promptness of completion of different kinds of students' work (Kostromina, 2013), and its incorrect assessment by supervisors could lead to unexpected students' procrastination.

Essential to the successful solving of research tasks are cognitive intellectual and creative abilities, defining the level of analytic-synthetic activity of students: the ability to distinguish common features and properties of objects or concepts, to compare, to think abstractly, to operate the knowledge; preference for an analytical thinking style, flexibility of thinking, etc. (Darinskaya & Rozum, 2014). Could supervisors accurately assess these abilities of

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