

DOI: 10.12731/2218-7405-2013-8-4

ENGAGING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND GRADUATE STUDENTS IN RESEARCH

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The article looks at classical and innovative methods and techniques, applied at Tumen State University, which help to engage students and graduate students in research.

Keywords: techniques to engage students in research; academic seminar, classical and innovative teaching techniques, competency building approach.

МЕТОДЫ ВОВЛЕЧЕНИЯ СТУДЕНТОВ И АСПИРАНТОВ В НАУЧНО-ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКУЮ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ В ВУЗЕ

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В статье рассмотрены классические и инновационные методы, условия, которые применяются и создаются в Тюменском государственном университете для решения проблемы вовлечения студентов и аспирантов в научно-исследовательскую деятельность.

Ключевые слова: методика организации научно-исследовательской работы со студентами; научный семинар, классические и инновационные методы обучения, компетентностный подход.

Creating methodological procedures to engage students in research and develop their professional competency is a priority task of a present-day university. University graduates have to find their place in the labour market, thus they have to

develop their self-presentation skills and use the right instruments. Engaging students in research is a complex and continuous process and there cannot be any universal technique to do so. Firstly, because there exist different specialities and, secondly, because there are certain demands at the labour market, which need to be taken into account when developing professional competency in students. There are two main aspects of student research – fundamental and practical. Development of the first aspect can help to create succession pool for higher education institutions, the second one helps to make university graduates more competitive at the labour market. Obviously, each student chooses which way to take.

Evidently, the scope of teachers' research has impact on their students' interest to either fundamental or applied science. For example, teaching staff of Document Science and Document Support Management Department of Tumen State University has developed a technique, which helps to engage students in research. The department conducts research in the three fields, where students and graduate students are trained; which are source study, history of records management and present-day problems of document support management. A document is the core and the subject matter of each of the three fields of scientific research. Studying a document without analyzing its historic background or subjective estimate of its creator is impossible. Cognitive approach allows viewing the source document as an information product of motivated human behavior, which forms the basis for analysis and synthesis of the acquired data. Developing learning skills in students that would enable not only acquisition of reproductive knowledge (which undoubtedly constitutes an important element of classical knowledge and helps students to learn phenomena and definitions, which have already been discovered), but assist them in gaining practical experience and apply their skills in performing project tasks and dealing with difficult situations is a primary task of the teaching staff of the department. Despite the fact that there are no omni-purpose means and the choice of teaching techniques mostly depends on the professor, the department staff has

developed a methodological core, which combines classical and innovative teaching techniques.

Classical techniques include informative education, whose task is to transfer knowledge and algorithms directly from teacher to student. However, present-day competency building approach presupposes not only transferring theoretical knowledge, but is aimed at helping students and graduate students develop practical skills when working with historical and contemporary documents. So, simulation, contextual and problem-solving techniques are used for this purpose. A competent specialist able to meet professional challenges and complying with the demands of present-day labour market is the end product of the activity of the department staff aimed at involving students in research and teaching.

The process of engaging students in research starts when students are in their first years at the university. Most advanced, intellectual and creative young researchers, willing and able to conduct research in modern environment with its high demands to efficiency, form the core of the group. There are several techniques and stages of detecting students capable of analytical work and research. For example, they can be lectures in the form of an open discussion between the professor and the students, when students have to search for solution to the problem. The department professors apply the technique widely. The first stage involves analysis of students' answers, encouraging their interest and helping them to eliminate stage fright. The second stage involves interaction between the professor and the student during seminars, simulation games, project games and case studies. The professors use innovative techniques and develop their own techniques, which are recognized both nationally and internationally. For example, associate professor S.N. Shcherbich benefits from a multimedia programme in Russian paleography, 'aimed at assisting in developing reading and translation skills when working with tachygraphic texts of the 17th-19th centuries'. The programme is designed as a network application, allowing the professor to monitor activities of every student, and the students - to deal with every single element of a document. The programme contains hundreds of archive

entries from Tumen and Tobol archives and lengthy literature lists, including Internet sources [3]. It is not only important to read the text correctly, but to age-date, assign authorship and detect other characteristics of a document using only implicit data characteristics of a particular historic epoch, as every historic epoch has its paleographic characteristics. If a document does not comply with them this could also be informative. Thus, a professor's priority task is to help students develop the skills of paleographic analysis [11, p.124; 12, 13]. According to S.N. Shcherbich, 'the complexity of the subject should not make teaching process monotonous and teaching technique has to undergo essential modifications with the help of IT-technology' [11, p.124; 12, 13]. The programme was awarded 3rd degree certificate at the Russian national contest of projects and solutions 'IT-Breakthrough' as it integrates IT-technology in teaching.

All these techniques help to teach students think on their feet and develop planning skills. The third stage involves individual interaction between the professor and the students and engaging them in academic and research events of departmental and university caliber, as well as regional, national and international workshops and conferences.

Teaching techniques to engage students and graduate students in the main fields of research are elaborated with the help of methodological seminars, conducted by the leading professors and associate professors of the department, where students and graduate students learn about general and specific research techniques adopted from other subject fields, which help to understand how documents are created and stored. Students are taught to respect and to be objective when analyzing the documents. Therefore, of key significance is anthropological factor present at all the stages of creation and existence of a document [7, p. 40]. Civilizational approach teaches being careful with subjective factors when analyzing the whole cluster of possibilities, which could hypothetically influence the creation of a document. Professors of the department V.P. Petrova and I.V. Skripina apply the technique of immersion into socio-cultural environment when studying historical documents [8,

p.167; 9, p.115]. The method involves both semantic and pragmatic aspects of analyzing documents, which allow classifying documents by their contents and purposing (as similar documents are usually meant for similar purposes). It is also important to study psycho-social conditions of the epoch, everyday life, ethnical, religious tensions and to understand that even official documents were influenced by subjective factors such as the state of mind of their authors. Thus, transferring experience in the form of tutorship helped to bring up a constellation of disciples who successfully apply the findings in source study and the history of records management. By involving students in the work with archive documents on acute and debatable problems N.V. Kudruavtsev and A.Y. Tarasyk create exploratory research culture [6, p. 150; 10, p. 60].

The department has an experimental site, where researchers can present their results. This was possible thanks to the initiative of associate professor T.N.Kondratyeva, who manages the publication of a collection of academic articles 'Document in operational and retrospective environment' [4]. Besides, there is a biannual Russian national conference 'Document in the framework of universal practices' [5] where students and graduate students can participate in scientific discussions. Undoubtedly, results of research, both fundamental and applied, have to be not only available within university environment, but go beyond its limit. Educational and academic community provides such an opportunity. Economic component of success is nowadays as essential as prestige, therefore, professors engage students in activities supported by academic grants and stipends.¹ Important is participation of students in Russian national and international academic contests and

¹ A.A. Belkova, two time fellowship holder of Oxford Russia Fund, Z.S. Shakirova also the Fund's fellowship holder. Students and graduate students of the department, headed by T.N. Kondratyeva, take part in the implementation of the project 'Historian's Future in Regional Dimension' as part of Federal Special Purpose Programme 'Scientific Brainpower and Academic Staff of Innovative Russia in 2009-2013'. Students, supervised by their professors take part in scientific papers contests. In 2012 A.A. Belkova, the 4th year student was awarded the 1st prize at the Regional Competition of Student Science Papers, topic - 'Recording of Head Tax Levying in Tumen District in 1718-1742' (based on the materials of Government Budgetary Institution of the Tumen Region State Archive of the Tumen Region), academic adviser – S.N. Shcherbich, associate professor, PhD in History.

conferences.² Therefore, by the time of their graduation many students have more than 10 scientific papers, including those published in scientific periodicals recommended by State Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles, which would help them in their future career as graduate students. Engaging students in academic activities and educating them about their importance consequently results in them defending candidate's theses. In autumn 2012 participants of academic seminars N.V.Kudruavtsev and E.V.Vasilieva successfully defended theses in special field 07.00.09 Historiography, Source Study and Historic Research Techniques [1].

In our opinion, present-day labour market with its stiff requirements creates a highly competitive environment for professionals. Thus, to build confidence in university graduates it is essential to engage them in practical and applied research from their first years at the university, as most of university graduates are employed by companies and enterprises. Such kind of applied research can be done in the form of drafting legal documents, designing systems of document support of management and designing specialized databases. Applied science attracts quite a large number of students.

Presently, competitive advantages of university graduates have to comply with the demands of present-day labour force, and should include superior skills and professionalism, being open to novelty, IT-knowledge, foreign language skills, etc. Both students and professors are involved in developing these skills. Participation of students in research activities foster development and adoption of new research techniques by both students and their professors, which results in synthesis of new knowledge.

² The students participated in various conferences, forums and schools, among which were the conference of fellowship holders of Oxford Russia Fund 'Dimensions of Humanitarian Knowledge' in Yaroslavl (November, 2012); International school 'Historian's Laboratory : Sources and Techniques' , Moscow State University, Moscow (November, 2012); 5th Russian Forum 'Electronic Government - a modern regional governance mechanism', Tumen (November, 2012), International Youth Science Forum 'Lomonosov-2013' (April, 2013), etc.

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