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Development of the Combined Study at the Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Ostrava

Abstract

This paper informs about the development of courses realised at the Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Ostrava in a combined study. It is engaged in the course of the Special Subject Teaching Studies in detail, which is guaranteed by the Department of Technical and Vocational Education.

Key words: *combined study, organisation, distant study and attendance study, research*

Introduction

The combined study is a type of study which combines the distant and the attendance form of study. We can say that this type of study is – at present – very expanded at Universities in the Czech Republic. There is a competent assumption that in the nearest future there will be more courses with a distant or a combined form of study.

At present individual education institutions are in a market background and to follow a situation in support of study is their existential necessity. After this situation they must correct their “educational policy”.

The educational system is pressed to react flexibly to social-economic changes that are manifest on the job market. There is an original Taylor concept of work with its segmented working acts and teamwork and its area and flexible structures. Traditional employee demand is flexibility today. Specialisation becomes a brake

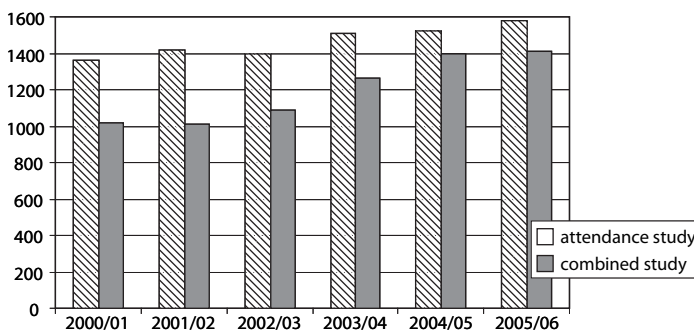
–accumulation of functions is typical; mobility among professions increases, citizens must be ready to change occupations.

The mentioned trends lead to an increase of motivation to life study. Among university students there is a bigger and bigger number of older people and mainly people that have their occupation or business activities. These students demand to realise their studies by a distant or a combined study. We can assume that the number of these students will continue to increase.

Organisation of courses realised by a combined form is different not only at individual universities but marked differences can be found among various courses inside a university or a faculty. Individual workplaces realise study according to concrete conditions and ideas. From this view it is very important to exchange experiences with the realisation of this type of study in order to guarantee or organizers of individual courses.

Combined study at the Pedagogical Faculty

At present the Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Ostrava offers to applicants six courses realised by a combined study. They are the Teaching Studies for the First Level of Primary Schools, the Special Subjects Teaching Studies, the Art –Pedagogical Studies of Music, the Information Technologies in the Process of Education, the Social Pedagogy – Prevention and Re-socialisation and the Special Pedagogy for the Nursery Schools Teachers and Educators. Interest in study of these courses is huge and the number of applicants exceeds the number of appointees every year. As Picture 1 shows, the number of students in combined forms of study increases.



Picture 1: Comparison of the number of students progress' at the Pedagogical Faculty in an attendance and a combined study.

In April 2006 the Pedagogical Faculty already registered 1409 students in the combined study. The complete number of the students of the Pedagogical Faculty was 2988. It means that 47.2% of the students of the Pedagogical Faculty study in the combined way of study.

As for the University of Ostrava as the whole we can note that the Pedagogical Faculty is an exception in that case. As we can see in Table 1 at the other faculties (the Faculty of Arts, The Faculty of Science, and the Medico-Social Faculty) there is an attendance study and the number of students in a combined study is minimum.

Table 1: Number of students in a combined study at individual faculties at the University of Ostrava

Faculty	The whole number of students	Number of students in a combined study	Ratio of students in a combined study
Pedagogical Faculty	2988	1409	47.2%
Faculty of Arts	1772	142	7.4%
Faculty of Science	1488	152	9.2%
Medico-Social faculty	868	16	1.8%
University of Ostrava	5973	1719	22.3%

The Special Subject Teaching Studies

The Department of Technical and Vocational Education of the Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Ostrava stipulates three-year Bachelor's and a continued two-year Master's course of the Special Subject Teaching Studies. These courses are accredited as combined and not paid. The study is in two specializations – Trade and Service and Engineering.

In the specialization of Trade and Service there are, in the Bachelor's study, 70–80 students per class. In the continued Master's study there are generally 40–50 students. The demand for study in this specialisation is huge. For a few years the number of applicants has already been three-four times bigger than the number of admitted ones. It is so in the Bachelor's course as in the Master's course. In the course of Engineering there is less interest in study. At present there is just a Bachelor study and a number of students in a class is about 20. In the academic year of 2007–2008 also a Master's study will be re-opened (the number of applicants is 50). Most students are teachers from vocational schools that do not have a university education.

For both specializations there are pedagogical and psychological disciplines, which make up about half the number of subjects. The remaining subjects evolve a chosen course. Part of study is also compulsory pedagogical training.

A range of an attended study for individual subjects is made after consultations with individual teachers and it is based on the type of the subject and on equipment by didactic instruments. The hour donation of the attended study for individual subjects is between 4 and 24 hours (that means 1-6 four-hour blocks). In each semester there are 5–7 subjects finished by a credit or an exam. There is an attendance exam. At the Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Ostrava an attendance part of education is always once a week in workdays. Each class has a set day of education (for example 1st class Friday). Education is in two 4-hour blocks – in the morning and in the afternoon. The hour donation is between 40–75 hours. The number of days with an attended education is between 5–10 per semester.

During the last years for the majority of subjects educational text supports have been made – the authors are mostly teachers of individual subjects. Some texts are at students' disposal in printed form in the University Library, then all of them are available on the Internet pages intended for these courses. Thanks to these educational supports, during the last year the attended part of the study has been reduced.

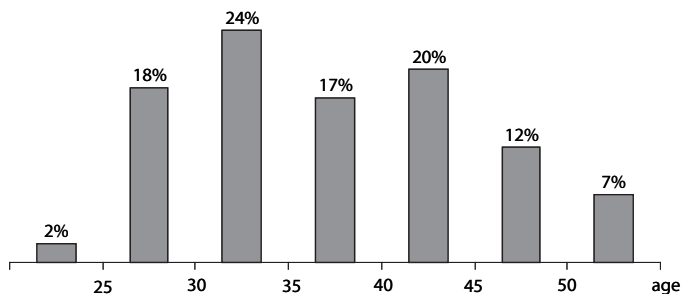
Except study department two pedagogic workers (one for each specialisation) and a secretary of the department participate in the organization of this course. Teachers are employees of individual departments of the Pedagogic Faculty of the University of Ostrava and also external co-operators, mainly from the Economic Faculty of VŠB-TU Ostrava.

The research

The research was done in March and in April 2006 among Special Subject Teaching Studies students. The target was to find information about the students of the presented course, their valuation of the study organisation, distant and attendance form of study, participation in the attendance study, and motivation for studying. Also the authors had at their disposal results from similar research done two years ago. So they could note changes in the opinions of the students. The research was done in the form of questions. Closed questions were used and there was space for expressions.

Respondents were the students of the presented course. The whole number of respondents was 274. Women: 68% and men: 32%. In the specialisation of Trade and Services there was a share of women even 79%. In the specialisation of Engineering men dominated with 90%. The age of the respondents, cf. Picture 2.

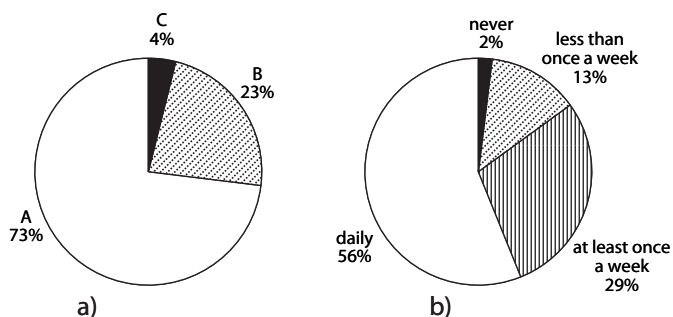
When we compare the age structure of the respondents with the results of the two-year old research we can say that the average age increased from 36 to 37. The most numerous age group is students between 30–35 – 24%.



Picture 2: Age structure of the respondents.

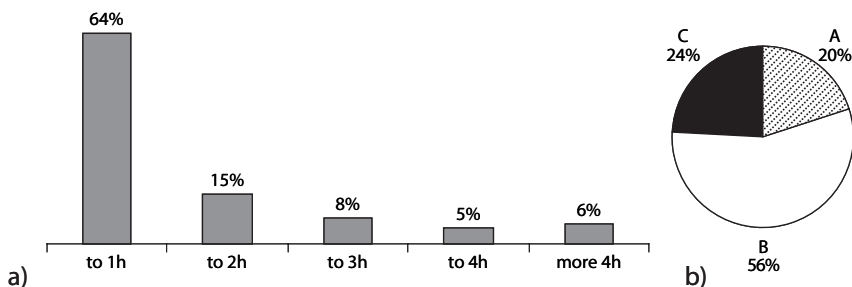
As for occupation, 75% of the respondents work as teachers, another 21% want to become teachers after study.

Interesting findings are access to the Internet and using E-mail. No problem access was for 73% of the respondents. In comparison with the two-year old research situation got better (that time it was 59%). However, there is still a big part of students that have problems with the access to PC (27%). 56% of the students use E-mail everyday.



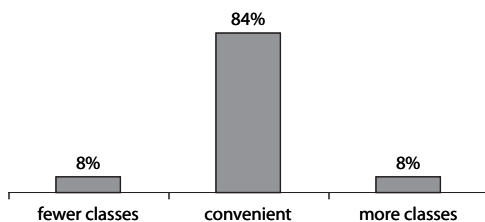
Picture 3: a) Respondents' access to PC and Internet (legend: A-no problem, B-limited, at home or at work, C-problems, at friend's, at Internet café etc.); b) using E-mail

With regard to possibility of continual limitation of the attendance study we have found addresses of students and their travelling to school for the attended study. Full 64% of the respondents are able to travel to school in one hour. 24% of the students have their home outside the Moravian-Silesian Region (Picture 4).



Picture 4: a) Time of travel from home to school; b) addresses of respondents (legend: A–in Ostrava, B–in the Moravian–Silesian Region except Ostrava, C–another place).

Next questions had to find the students' opinions for the range of attendance education. Participation in the attendance education is on the average 90.5%. The actual range of the attendance education is suitable for most students (84% – cf. picture 5). 8% of the respondents would like fewer classes and 8% more classes of the attendance education. Results of the two-year old research were similar.



Picture 5: Results of the research about the range of the attended study.

In connection with this we attended to the students' place of living as well. We expected that mainly students from outside the Moravian-Silesian Region will require less attendance study. This hypothesis was not confirmed. Only 11% of these students would welcome fewer classes of the attendance study. These students have big financial and time costs for their travel. The present range is suitable for them (83%).

At present education at weekdays proceeds, which is suitable for 81% of the students. Only 19% of the students would prefer weekends. As for study text supports – the students refuse studying from display, they prefer printed text (96%). Full 70% use services of the University Library.

Another group of questions led to students' satisfaction with communication with organisers of the study, with the Department of the Study and with educators. This communication is mainly personal or by phone or e-mail, on the average only 5% students have some objections.

Table 2: Communication

	with organisers	with Department of Study	with educators
convenient	100%	94%	90%
objections	0%	5%	9%
not convenient	0%	1%	1%

The last question had to find out what motivated students (often of an older age) to study this course. The order of the questions is in Table 3. Beside purchase of new knowledge a common answer was to keep occupation as well (66% of the respondents).

Table 3: Motivation for study

1.	Purchase of new knowledge and skills	74%
2.	Keeping occupation	66%
3.	Higher wage	59%
4.	Career progress	51%
5.	Social status	44%
6.	Purchase of new occupation	44%

Conclusion

The results of the research brought important information that would be a basis for further progress of the presented course.

It appeared that most students prefer the present range of the attendance study and do not wish to reduce it. That is for the students that commute to the attendance study for a few hours from various parts of the republic as well. The students are very content with mutual communication and with the organization of study that is why we do not plan to apply any special information software in the future. Because some students have problems with their occupation, we wanted to move the attendance study to weekends. The students rejected it – weekend study would be suitable for less than one fifth of the students. If we notice the motivation to study we are not surprised that two thirds of the respondents were motivated by a danger of losing their occupation. Most students work at Secondary Vocational or Professional Schools and they do not have the necessary university education.

Compared to similar research done two years ago the situation for students with respect to access to the Internet and E-mail got better. Nevertheless, still more than one fourth of students has limited access to PC. We must have this situation in mind during possible implementing of e-learning into the education.

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