

Chapter 13

Student–Psychologists’ and Conflictologists’ Formation of Scientific Research Competence in the Process of Learning at the University

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ABSTRACT

The current stage of society’s development is a constant demand of future professionals in the field of psychology and conflictology of research skills in the relevant field. Psychologists and conflictologists, as practitioners, should be able to analyze the situation with which they are accessed by clients, to identify the reasons that led to this situation, to predict various variants of the development of the event under certain conditions and methods of correction, direct or indirect impact. Psychologist and conflictologist must also own the methodology of the research, know the main stages of the research, be able to plan, organize and carry out research in the social sphere, describe and visualize its results, without forgetting the ethics of the research. In this chapter is analyzed the structure students-psychologists’ and conflictologists’ scientific research competence, the content of its main component is described.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the time student and undergraduate student research has become an imperative for research-intensive universities. This has been correlated with increased participation in postgraduate research, with one study suggesting that PhD completion rates were doubled for students who had participated in undergraduate research. Increased completion rates will be of major interest to research-focused academics, because they are part of the funded measures of research-excellence in some countries. Undergraduate research has also been associated with higher levels of student satisfaction and with their perceptions of generic skill development as well as being of considerable educational significance, in Belarus at least, measures of such indicators are linked to the substantial dispensation of money as per the Teaching and Learning Performance Fund. Curiously, studies of undergraduate student research typically lack a strong empirical basis, with a scarcity of 'research findings upon which sound evaluation strategies might be grounded'. One of the reasons for this may be the lack of theoretical framework from which to conceptualize undergraduate research across all disciplines. This chapter posits research and the development of research skills as both a product and a process of university education. This involves students learning how to research within a specific discipline, akin to 'research-orientated teaching'; it also involves students conducting their own research, as per Griffiths' 'research-based teaching'. We represent student research as a continuum of knowledge production, from knowledge new to the learner to knowledge new to humankind, moving from the commonly known, to the commonly not known, to the totally unknown. Students may be positioned at various stages along that continuum. Many commence undergraduate studies already familiar with the process of developing knowledge new to themselves. Few come to postgraduate studies ready to explore or create knowledge new to humankind. A dilemma for staff and students alike is how to chart the movement along this research continuum and how to facilitate that movement. This chapter is developed on the premise that, in order to engage in meaningful research, students would benefit from the explicit development of their research skills, as would the staff guiding that development. The focus of this chapter, then, is to present a framework for the Research Skill Development of coursework students. The framework is for lecturers who want to conceptualize how they will facilitate this development. It is also for educational leaders concerned about student ratings and research funding issues and for researchers wanting to study research skill development and the links between teaching and research. In the chapter, it first explores the relationship between undergraduate education and university research. Next, it considers just what is understood by research skill development and outline studies which have been carried out into the concept in the undergraduate years. It then presents our RSD framework and its application to a particular course of study, and the findings of a one-year pilot study with emergent research questions for the main study currently underway.

BACKGROUND

In analyzing the development history of the competence approach, it should be noted that there are differences in the understanding by different authors of the process and the result of education, and the complexity and multidimensionality of the interpretation of the concept of competence. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the first mention of the term "competence" refers to year 1605. The notion of "competence" became more widespread in everyday life and literature at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the "Complete Dictionary of Foreign Words, Usually Used in the Russian

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