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TUTOR SUPPORT OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES DURING THEIR SKAILING UP AT THE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The relevance of research is connected with scaling up of students' project activities in Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University. This determined the necessity of analysis and creating the action strategy in accordance with massive tutor reporting. Free form report is uninformative, time consuming and difficult to study in this situation. The aim of this article is to create and to define the abilities of using pre-worked out according to methodology criteria of tutor's report for its next analysis, as well as of maintaining the focus on professional responsibility for all the main activities of tutor, who supports student project teams based on NTI University 20.35 model. The competence approach in education defines the methodology basis; the main principles are advance, compliance of education with scientific and technological progress, individualization. Experiment and questioning with its next analysis and systematization are among the research methods. The article shows the reference indexes for tutors, their criteria and methodological justification: the team motivation, team dynamics, the level of goal setting and mindfulness, student subjectivity. Their effectiveness for different process participants, such as tutor, supervisor, student, is analyzed and evaluated. It can be useful when these subjects of educational process occur on a massive scale. The article is intended for governing structures, teachers, and tutors of both secondary and high education.

Keywords: Criteria, project activities, supervisor, tutor

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1. Introduction

Nowadays the idea of individual educational programs and plans became a part of the state doctrine and educational documents, at the same time "tutor" position took place at the list of pedagogical professions, so the tutoring technology introduction in mass education institutions is more often required. Employers raise requirements towards university graduates, who are asked for the skill of making decision in the situation of uncertainty and learning new skills, if necessary. This leads to a tutor being an important part of student's support in educational process. Moreover, giving to the tutors a full-time position in high school educational process is recommended by regulations, which provide the shift of educational system to third generation standards (Syryamkina et al., 2016).

In Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University, there were the experiments in 2018-2019, when tutor support model was tested. The students' projects teams on the basis of their educational and personal failures were the sources of problematization. The constraint analysis of the experiment results showed, that the data collection concerning the tutorial results was subjective, at the same time a written report was difficult to handle with traditional methods. When scaling up project activities in the university in September 2019, the problem was expected to grow strong, because reading the reports about meetings of 140 teams in order to reflect the image of the situation and analyze it afterwards would be time-consuming and hardly informative, as far as there was no report standards.

The problem became even more difficult, because almost no first-years student knew in the beginning of the course about professional duties or opportunities of a tutor. The school graduates, who got used to the object model, experienced obligatory project activities and as a result, it led to the slow-down in the tendency of subject features development or even to the denial of their necessity in some cases. From the other side, the grate number of new tutors lacked professional and practical experience. At the same time, they performed the role of students themselves. However, it is tutor, who is responsible for creating the right meaning of how valuable this profession is.

2. Problem Statement

When scaling up project activities in Novgorod State University, the loss of situation analysis effectiveness, as well as high risks, that first-year students would create or preserve wrong model or deny tutor support were expected. As a result, there was the necessity to develop the criteria, which would be convenient to handle with for different management levels and would guide tutors when they perform tutorials through filling in the report form, what is considered the professional reflection of the work done. The criteria, which clearly and definitely fix the results, help to focus on the values, which need to be transmitted at every meeting, if it is possible.

3. Research Questions

3.1. What tutor report criteria should be in order to be clearly interpreted and convenient for analysis?

3.2. What are the opportunities of criteria usage for tutors, supervisors and organizers?

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3.3. What are the restrictions of the criteria usage, which were found during the experiment?

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the research is to find clearly interpreted and convenient criteria with indexes, which provide next levels of tutoring management:

- organizational: tutorants cross-section – motivation of the team, promotion or demotion of the team according to managers' decisions or team results at the key events; tutors cross-section – the relevance of knowledge, the thoughtful planning of meetings, the skill to choose the instruments for planned tasks, the quality of meeting results reflection;
- methodological – the criteria in reports, which would help professional growth if being learned;
- prognostic – analysis of tutors' reports by a supervisor as the problematization for making discussion at the meeting.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Methodological Research

The methodological base of research includes competence and subject-object educational approaches, which are widely used and introduced recently. Particularly, the competence model of National Technology Initiative University 20.35 (Loshkareva et al., 2017) formed the basis of the tutor support experiment with students' project activities teams and then of the scaling up the support in Novgorod State University.

The realization of this approach was built on the principles of advance, developmental education, especially when speaking of educational aims strategy (by tutorials), and compliance of education with scientific and technological progress as well (by project activities).

The performance of the project activities team, based on the analysis of the experiment "NTI University 20.35 in NSU, 2018" and literature analysis formed the research material.

Motivation. A project team has to reach certain results; namely, desire and intention to achieve one's purpose are the main sources of motivation according to goal setting theory (Krushelnitskaya et al., 2019; Nikitskaya & Tolstykh, 2018). In order to estimate the results the scale from 0 to 2 was introduced.

Goal setting level. This index is due to "valuable insight" phenomenon, which shows, when choice process is productive. As the result of this situation, a subject makes a decision, which turns out to be right and efficient for one afterwards (Filonik, 2011). In order to estimate the level of goal setting the criteria are suggested: clearly stated result, transparent context, apprehension of resources, environmental friendliness, apprehension of first step.

Team Dynamics. People around and relations with them *affect* the process *of* forming the motivation for study a lot according to the expectancy and values theory (Nikitskaya & Tolstykh, 2018). Moreover, when working in a team not only personal sympathy can form the basis of authority, but activity abilities and skills of a teammate as well; this results in efficient project activities. (Babanin, 2015). Constructive

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and active building of team dynamics potential, their actualization and performance strongly influence the results, which will be achieved (Yang et al., 2019; Zverev & Stroh, 2019). The most often pointed out team development stages were chosen as the criteria: forming, storming, norming, performing.

Mindfulness. It is useful for students to know how to formulate the state of non-acquaintance, one's real abilities, the need in development, when performing personal process of knowledge structuring both in professional and study activity. (Seter & Stan, 2018). This goal is possible to reach if considering the principle of developmental education, which effectiveness was proved by psychological, pedagogical science and methodology of high education. (Chirkova, 2015). The level of mindfulness can be regulated with the help of teacher of higher education institution (Anca & Bocos, 2017; Wong et al., 2019). As for the criteria, we chose the level of students' formulations, when answering tutor's questions: socially expected, on the level of emotions, being criterion.

Subjectivity of Tutorants. The development of teaching stuff work system for innovational activity includes the realization of subject-object approach methodology. For this, educational goals, content of education, didactic instruments, which comply with requirements for integrity and entirety of students' realization, are renewed (Tyunnikov, 2017; Zobkov, 2019). The criteria are situational markers of particular images within situations and pronouns "I – We – They".

5.2. Research Methods

During the research, we used the methods: analysis of pedagogical literature on the topic, experiment (stating hypothesis and approbation of the tutoring reports criteria), poll method (questioning of students). The research took place in Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University from October to December 2019. 11 tutors of project activities teams participated in the research, 179 tutorials were taken as the material. The questioning of students (N=43) allowed specifying idea of tutor profession, created during the performance. The analysis and estimation of the suggested criteria let us recommend some of them for usage in scaled up tutoring activity.

6. Findings

When filling in a report form a beginner usually has problems with formulation and estimation of what is going on inside the team, forming tasks for the next meeting is difficult as well. Some hints, which are put in the report form, can help to orientate in formulations and perform educational function. The Google form was taken for reporting, as far as it's filling in is not time-consuming, if having proper skills. It is important, because time is the main loss, which happens during project activities. The indexes, such as motivation of the team, its dynamics, the level of goal setting, mindfulness and subjectivity of tutorants were suggested for analysis. Every criterion was worked out methodically for every index; it led to overall coverage of possible variations. Moreover, a tutor had to present the meeting plan in the text form, instruments for every tasks and the results.

The tutors cross-section showed their knowledge very clearly from the first meeting. After the analysis it was possible to define gaps in tutors training, which correlates with comprehension of team development. The results stated, that the teams were at the stage of storming (25% of answers), though

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friendliness, inspiration and working atmosphere were noted. Moreover, at the meeting the tutors fixed the performing stage. It demonstrates the miscomprehension of team dynamics.

It is important for a tutor to work with team intercommunion, because in the situation of confrontation, absence of common goals and working atmosphere at the meeting, the efficient dialogue is impossible. In order to define this index, the criteria were chosen (listed in occurrence decreasing order): often interact at the meeting, feel team's advantage, define oneself and others as team members, have common norms, define each other, have a sense of community, have a tendency to act unitary. The mindfulness and the level of reflection are possible to analyze through tutorants' answers formulations: socially expected, on the level of emotions, being criterion.

The inserted methodological hints also said that it is not efficient to start projecting individual path, if the goal setting of tutorant is on the level of common formulations or simple task (how to get credit), though there was registered 56% of answers that kind, some of them kept till the end of semester. It is typically for the teams, which formulate goals with common words, that only 6% of their answers were not socially expected or based on emotions level. Those, who formulated the goals as the topical tasks, had 35% of answers being criterion, and those, who are able to formulate the goals correctly, had 73% of answers, which had some criteria basis and could be justified.

The proper level of goal setting, which is necessary for the formation and realization of individual educational path, can be estimated according to the quite precise criteria, such as clearly stated result, transparent context, the apprehension of resources, environmental friendliness and apprehension of first step. If one of them is missing, a tutor has to specify and correct students' goal setting at the next meeting. At the same time, the context criterion (when, where and who will realize the project) is the most clear and easy to formulate (71% of those, who formulate the goals by criteria). About a half of students almost managed to reach the stated results and the apprehension of resources. 23% of answers shows the apprehension of first step by students, and 16% - its environmental friendliness. Only one answer includes all 5 criteria together; transition from 0 or 1 to 2-3 criteria is more often.

Besides the listed upon criteria there was also an attempt to watch for the development of team members' subjectivity with the help of the situational markers of particular images within different real and imaginable situations and pronouns "I – We – They". As for the results, these markers for team meetings analysis turned out to be least reliable for definite interpretation. Nonetheless, it is should be recognized, that these markers would be more useful and convenient for analysis in the situation of individual tutorials.

The prognostic level for supervisors' activity was effective in general with some criteria. It showed, to whom and with what questions students were redirected in order to solve their problems (the apprehension of professional responsibility and its limits). At the first supervision, there was discussion of the alarming situation: though at the tutors' meeting some personal, external and intra-team problems were highlighted, in order to solve them the teams were redirected in 100% of cases to a tutor, who was not responsible for any of these problems. Creating limits for professional responsibility was relevant for defining adequate expectations of every project activities participant as well.

If speaking about the level of tutors' mindfulness, which they have to transfer to the students, a supervisor can track it through answers in reports according to the same criteria: the level of formulation and goal setting. For example, 4 from 7 notes of the tutors at the first meeting were more likely emotional,

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rather than professional: “friendly team, which is nicely to work with”. The tutors had the professional level of goal setting based on emotions. In general, it is a matter of discussion at the supervision; also, it would be useful for parallel methodical training of tutors-beginners, which, unfortunately, is not included in NSU supervision model.

A professionally formed tutor is not enough for supporting project activities team, because the erosion of value basis and leaving the limits of professional role can occur. The idea of “monitor” is the most often discussed. The answers form from tutorants is the most adequate way for fixing this shift, because the teams are those, who spend the biggest amount of time with a tutor. There are more than 4 people in a team, a tutor monitors more than one team usually, so average rating, which is close to reality, is quite possible.

There are some markers suggested: whether tutor’s questions are helpful for a student to formulate one’s thoughts, whether a tutor listens or speaks more, whether a student understands, what is going on at the meeting, whether a student knows something new about oneself after the meeting. If the answer is positive, a student can give some arguments to it.

There were 2 questionings of the tutorants: in the middle of project activity, when a tutor and a team established mutual understanding/tutorants managed to create clear apprehension of the goals and the results of the meetings, and in the end. They were mostly oriented to the feedback from students in order a tutor to perform self-analysis.

7. Conclusion

The scaling up of the project activities in higher education institutions increases the possibility of developing the tutor activity with new structure. The tutor support of student project teams is quite a challenge from both administrative point of view and the professionalism of tutor and supervisor, as far as it not only provides new opportunities, but creates problems as well. Some reliable instruments, presented as clear criteria with some indexes, which a tutor fixes at every meeting, help to actualize the problems operatively and to avoid them in future. The performance of the indexes is maximal, if there are preformulated and methodologically organized criteria. From the range of them, a tutor can choose the one, which best fits to the situation.

The most constructive criteria for tutors and supervisor are those connected with motivation of the team, team dynamics, the level of goal setting and mindfulness. Such criteria as meeting plan, instruments for every task and result turned out to be quite time-consuming for analysis, but still convenient for supervisor’s prognostic activity from both the point of meaningful content and the formulations being criterion.

In order to reach good results it is important for tutors to understand that they need to fill in the form after the meeting as far as it is possible, when all the details are still kept in mind and there is no formalism in the work and its rating. When a tutor finds difficult to answer a question in a report, one must be ready to consider it as personal lack of knowledge and to deal with it oneself. If the level of mindfulness is not enough, the methodological training of tutors-beginners is recommended.

Another important factor is activity of supervisor, to whom the analysis of the tutors’ reports will be helpful for creating prognostic plan for the meeting (when developed, the skill of self-reflection can be

replaced with intervision). The questioning of the students with suggested form can be used as additional material for tutor's self-analysis.

The presented model has some restrictions, because the indexes of students' subjectivity development were not convenient for analysis of the team tutorials, but may be tested for individual ones. The markers of team motivation for administrative decisions were less used, than it was expected, mostly because of the shift to methodological and prognostic goals.

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