

# ABOUT EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE – STUDENT’S VIEWPOINT

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**Abstract.** Extra-curricular activity of modern youth, including university students, is considered to reduce. Students are thought to demonstrate consumer’s attitude, unwillingness to participate in any social activity, and as a result, the level of soft skills acquired by university students is decreasing. The study of social activity of 100 Bachelor graduates from TPU, including the program "Electrical engineering", indicated the role of the university in creation of conditions for competence development during training of students according to individual educational trajectory and development of their social (extra-curricular) activity.

## 1 Introduction

Modern society brings up the problem of development of social activity of university graduates able to design and build a new environmental reality, to eliminate outdated stereotypes of activity, make innovative changes in different spheres of social life.

According to [1], some researchers concerned with understanding of the universities training process as a system that integrates academic and extra-curricular activities. Many universities around the world offer extra-curricular activities, from sports to training or professional activities. One of the main objectives and concerns of colleges and universities is to reach an appropriate employability level for their students. But employability is a complex and vague concept, that goes from identifying personal and academic students skills to other educational outcomes as demographic data affecting graduate employment. [2]

These kinds of skills are more likely to be developed in non-formal education in youth organisations. [3]

In particular, the professional competence formation in a future specialist during practical training is interconnected with the educational projects system introduction, which includes: integration of personal, professional, financial, technical and educational resources; competent specialists innovative training in the specific environment; the scientific projects adaptation to the specifics of practical and innovative learning processes.

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Based upon a literature review and analysis of best practices, it seems almost self-evident that student engagement, including extracurricular activities, has a positive impact on student academic performance. [4]

The university system of training of engineers must take into account all professional aspects of a modern specialist and identify not only the subject and activity structure of the education, but also the significant conditions of a specialist's professional activity, the absence of which makes this professional activity complicated [5] .

## **2 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **2.1 Objectives of the research**

Hypothesis. Extra-curricular activity enhances soft skill development. Participation in extra-curricular activity increases the level of soft skills among graduates.

Objective: to determine the basic forms of student social activity, to design and conduct a survey of students, to identify the competencies acquired by the university graduates as a result of their participation in different types of student activities, as well as to find out the role of the university in soft skill development.

### **2.2 Theoretical and empirical methods**

The following research methods were used to achieve the objectives: theoretical - analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature on research, modeling method; empirical method through observation, pedagogical experiment, testing, questioning, conversation; mathematical methods of data processing.

## **3 Results and discussion**

To study the social activity of TPU bachelor graduates, a questionnaire was designed with 19 questions related to the types of activities and the conditions that enhance the development of soft and hard skills. The survey was conducted among 100 bachelor graduates, including students trained in "Electrical engineering".

### **3.1 The results of the survey conducted among TPU students**

According to the survey, 79 % of TPU bachelor graduates were engaged in extra-curricular activities, and 57 % of respondents consider themselves successful people. This indicates that they gained sufficient basis for start up of their professional activity or social development. The categories of the success highlighted by the respondents were graduation from the top university, occupational work, and skills and abilities gained.

The survey revealed that 70 % of respondents participated in scientific conferences, 62 % of graduates have experience in writing research papers and have their papers published, 22 and 13 % of respondents conducted research and developed their own engineering solutions, respectively. The study results showed that 6 % of the respondents were engaged in student counselling and 30 % of bachelor graduates participated in creative life of the university, 29 % of graduates were active in sports, and 17 % of respondents were involved in volunteer activities.

To answer the question about the most significant achievement in student's life, the graduates identified: participation in scientific conferences (10 %) (3 % of them became

winners), publication in periodicals (including those in English (6 %), self-engineered products (4 %), including those patented (3 %), scholarships (including 2 % of those received the scholarship of the President of the Russian Federation), volunteering, creativity, athletic performance, practical training and internship (9 %). However, 2 % of respondents emphasized the importance of obtaining a diploma of higher education as a whole. More than 50% of master's students plan to be involved in various student activities while doing their Master's degree program that can be attributed to previous positive experience, the cue from successful projects of group mates, the influence of the supervisor and the need for soft skills development. The survey results show more than 2-fold increase in students' desire to be engaged in scientific activity (23 %), to develop self-engineered products (8 %), to have their research published (9 %), to actively participate in creative activity (9 %), sports (9 %), self-government (3 %) and counselling and mentoring (2 %). In addition, master's students must successfully combine studies, research and work (implementation of their own projects, fulfillment of orders and engineering development and etc.), gain experience and develop soft and hard skills.

The authors also tried to identify the factors that motivate students to student activities. Most of the respondents (56 %) indicate self-development, 54 % of respondents lay emphasis on the work during their studies and 52 % of respondents emphasize the opportunity to participate in internships in companies and participation in conferences and other events in Russia and Europe. The survey showed that 32 % of respondents work out a portfolio to submit it to the employer. Internal motivators like a letter of appreciation or a diploma from the University administration were chosen by 43 %. The factor of being a member of a team was reported by 31% of respondents, and access to corporate events was mentioned by 25 % of respondents. The scholarship as a stimulating bonus was found important by 93 % of respondents.

More than 70 % of TPU graduates assert that the university created the conditions for soft skill development. The respondents said that student activities help to develop communication skills (63 %), self-presentation skills (46 %) and teamwork skills (46 %), as well skills to establish business relations (45 %), to participate in projects (35 %), skills in gaining experience (portfolio) (39 %) and talent development (29 %).

While participating in student activities, future graduates are oriented towards the requirements of employers. These include work experience (9 %), English proficiency (11 %), ability to work as a team (14 %), readiness for self-development and self-education (4 %), the ability to communicate (4 %), self-presentation (5 %), orientation to knowledge, including the basics of electrical power engineering (4 %), literacy (2 %), the ability to give scientific credence to the proposed technical solution (development of a new power supply device and etc.) (2 %), implementation of modern software tools (CAD) as well as personal qualities: punctuality, attentiveness, creative approach to work, ability to work individually, ability to manage a project or work within the framework of the project, responsibility, organizational skills, analysis of scientific and texts (information), development of scientific and engineering texts (information). None of the respondents focused on the requirements for proficiency in modern computer technologies that can be attributed to sufficient ICT level of the graduates (more than 44 % of respondents according to their own estimates).

The university, in turn, helped 95% of TPU graduate respondents develop the following soft skills: team work (60 %), the ability to make self-presentation (49 %), the ability to present their developments (39 %), the ability to work with information (64 %), creativity (26 %), leadership (30 %), the use of knowledge to manage complex engineering activities (8 %), skills in written and oral communication in Russian (34 %) and English (5 %), exercitation of legal and cultural aspects, knowledge of issues related to safety and health (17 %), awareness of the university's corporate culture (4 %) and organization (11%).

The survey showed that 95 % of respondents acquired competences, but at the same time they do not admit their involvement in extracurricular activities. Thus, we can conclude that soft skills are developed among more than 25 % of students as a result of learning activities (active learning and interactive techniques).

According to the survey results, the University organizes the events involving employers to identify the requirements for future graduates in the form of job fairs (68 %), provides participation in network projects (14 %), organizes professional (71%) and research (41%) training, invites leading representatives of enterprises and companies to deliver lectures (25 %), holds summer employer schools (14 %), roundtables (27 %) and scholarship programs (22 %). In addition, competence of graduates can be identified through a survey, poll, employer interviewing (14 %), and company open days (42 %). Therefore, it is necessary to develop cooperation with companies, including that to identify key soft skills.

The analysis of the events in which students are encouraged to participate by university, showed that the percentage of the participants of university and city levels is higher than that of the students participating in the events inside the campus. The number of the students involved in the activities at Russian and international level is actively increasing.

## Conclusion

The results of the survey confirmed the viability of pedagogical maintenance of student social activity as a system. The study revealed that the level of soft skills competencies of those participating in student activities is higher by more than 40 %, than that of the students not involved in student activities. The level of soft skills development must be considered to build individual educational trajectories of students.

Students who participate in extracurricular activities generally benefit from the many opportunities afforded them. Social activity of students during training in a bachelor' degree program is a basic prerequisite for the graduate to get a sense of success to hold this position in postgraduate study.

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