The Stewardship of School Counselor Education in Higher Educational Establishments

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Abstract

Social Pedagogy is a new discipline in Kazakhstan. The issues regarding the quality counselor education remain under attention of researchers in education management, as the number of grants for this specialization grows from year to year, so as the regional demand for competent counselors. Government control and employer oversight are being tightened, while the range of problems that counselors face increases. Besides, innovation processes in education are channeled either towards maintaining the existing level of quality or towards reaching an even higher level. This article intends to analyze the methodological support of quality assurance in counselor education at the university.

Key words: school counselor, education quality, methodological support, learning environment, university education.

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La administración de la educación de consejeros escolares en establecimientos de educación superior

Resumen

La pedagogía social es una nueva disciplina en Kazajstán. Los problemas relacionados con la educación del consejero de calidad siguen bajo la atención de los investigadores en la gestión de la educación, ya que el número de subvenciones para esta especialización crece de un año a otro, así como la demanda regional de consejeros competentes. El control del gobierno y la supervisión del empleador se están reforzando, mientras que la gama de problemas que enfrentan los consejeros aumenta. Además, los procesos de innovación en educación se canalizan hacia el mantenimiento del nivel de calidad existente o hacia un nivel aún más alto. Este artículo pretende analizar el apoyo metodológico de aseguramiento de la calidad en la educación de consejeros en la universidad.

Palabras clave: consejero escolar, calidad educativa, apoyo metodológico, ambiente de aprendizaje, educación universitaria.

1. INTRODUCTION

The system of higher education is being constantly modernized. In Kazakhstan, the process of establishing universities of a new type has been boosted on the background of innovation-driven industrial development. These universities perform with a focus laid on the innovation and on the unity of science and education. At the same time, education quality is one of the major challenges and the

university is obliged to provide a quality education. This implies fostering student's ability to replenish and update knowledge, skills and competencies effectively following the latest achievements in science. The student must be also able to organize his learning process with regard to requirements for educational content, imposed by employers, the government, society, as well as by the students themselves and by their parents. At this point, serious institutional changes are made and independent quality assessment tools are introduced such as independent national accreditation and independent ranking.

In the context of education quality management, Mutanovet al.(2011) introduced the results-based management concept, which specific feature is that it provides for designing clear indicators for assessing the teaching personnel performance and the performance of strategic management units. Thus, if the World Education Program Ranking is taken as a strategic parameter, then performance assessment indicators will be represented by such criteria as the Methodological Support Quality, Publication Activity, etc. Damitov et al. (2009) &Kalanova (2006) have guided the establishment of a large scientific school, which is into researching on tools designed for diagnosing and examining the education quality assurance, and into laying grounds for national accreditation and licensing mechanisms. The worked out quality assessment criteria give much attention to consumer demands, employer involvement in the learning process, employability of graduates and international achievements of students. Seydakhmetova (2013) analyzed the leading players that affect the education quality

development, drawing attention to the need in practitioners and potential employers being involved in the elective course design. Skiba (2009) &Kokanee's (2004) suggest laying an emphasis on the teaching personnel performance. Thus, Abazov and Ibrayeva (2009) believe that full-fledged and high-quality implementation of education programs directly depends on the university staff motivation and levels of satisfaction and involvement in the process of improvement.

Generally, Kazakhstan has come to a national model of higher education that meets international standards and requirements. Thus, the majority of Kazakh universities signed the Magna Charta Universitatum (March 11, 2010). Kazakhstan became the 47th member of the Bologna Process and a first Central Asian country in the list. A new technology of learning process organization, focused on ECTS, has been in use since 2004. The Government has passed a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) compliant with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The Republic was registered in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). At the same time, its Government has launched a national register of accreditation agencies (May 31, 2012) that has a legal effect on accredited universities and programs. The Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR) and the Independent Kazakhstan Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (IQAA) are also in touch.

Nevertheless, content analysis of the latest academic and methodological conferences (Conference collections for 2014 and 2016), devoted to the issues of education program quality, revealed

that issues regarding the management of higher-education staff development remain high on the agenda, so as the outcome-driven methodology-based education program design and the support of joint education programs quality. The same problems apply to counselor education programs. Education programs are obviously designed with regard to the best experience, but still are adapted by learning content to the specific features of the region. They must take into account the mental profiles of students, staff readiness to implement the program, etc. The difference between the Social Pedagogy and the Social Work courses is that the first one is taught under the assumption that students will be more into teaching that into other activities. Based on thereof, graduates acquire skills and competencies necessary for handling students within the learning environment of various educational establishments (Dinershtein & Aleeva, 2017).

Consumer satisfaction (in our case, student satisfaction) usually stands behind the quality and success of any education program. Its quality also depends on those, who organize the teaching and learning process – on the department staff. On such basis, we suggested that student satisfaction with the quality of learning is interrelated with the teaching staff performance, with the technologies and resources applied to organize the teaching and learning process, with the assessment technologies and with a degree of communication openness. The purpose of this research is to analyze the methodological support of quality assurance in counselor education at the university. Research objectives are to analyze the student satisfaction with the learning process organization, instruction quality,

individual activity organization and its assessment system and with the scheduling procedure.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Shishov and Kalney (1998) who developed such an important field in pedagogical science as Education Quality Monitoring, consider the education quality as a social category determining the state and effectiveness of education, its compliance with social demands and expectations when it comes to shaping, and developing the civil and common professional competences of a person (1998). Potashnik (2004) points out that education quality is a goal-outcome ratio; a goal (outcome) achievement measure taken with the assumption that goals are set without regard to specific features of local teaching and learning process and are forecasted within the school-age child development potential. In general, education quality provides for standards that must be met in order to achieve the set goals. At the same time, education quality support is a mechanism for monitoring the goal achievement.

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) suggests focusing on three areas while assessing the quality of education: a) ensuring that European universities have sufficient and sustainable resources and use them efficiently; b) consolidating excellence in teaching and research and c) opening up universities to a greater extent to the outside and increase their

international activities (Nicolescu and Dima, 2010). Quality support mechanisms include both internal and external processes and bodies. External quality control is usually performed through external bodies, such as quality assurance agencies. Many countries now take their issues to quality assurance agencies. This has entailed the formation of international agency networks. Such international accreditation agencies have designed their own manuals and guidelines for their members (Shurygin&Krasnova, 2017). The intramural quality control can be based on the EFQM model and the effectiveness criteria intended for measuring the effectiveness of the intramural quality management. The reason for applying the EFQM model principles to build the intramural quality assurance system is that it is aimed at the innovation-driven development and improvement of the university performance quality. According to the EFQM model, quality management system can be assessed by nine criteria, divided in two groups: Opportunities and Outcomes. Criteria belonging to the Opportunities group are the Administrator's Leadership, Politics and Strategy, Personnel Management, Resources and Partners, Processes. The Outcomes group includes the following criteria: Consumer Satisfaction, Staff Satisfaction, University's Impact on Societies, University Performance. The criteria I provide insight into the matter and help to assess how the outcomes are reached, while the criteria II include the major indicators and results of university performance (anything what the university has achieved with the available opportunities) (Nabi, 2014).

Foreign literature and the international university practices review show that issues regarding the improvement of the education program quality are worldwide trend. The principles of quality management imply that quality assurance should be an integral part of teaching and learning, and quality cannot be assessed at the end. For example, Harvey lists four prerequisites of effective quality assurance and program improvement:

a) Promoting continuous quality improvement (CQI) instead of bureaucratic reporting;

b) Promoting empowerment of people, who can affect the process of improvement;

c) Bottom-up CQI auditing;

d) Ensuring that the process is unhindered, rational and effective.

Another approach places greater focus on the performance indicators (Massy, 1996). These include measures of inputs (for example, number of enrolments, number of faculties, revenues, expenditures), outputs (credits and degrees granted, research publications), and overt measures of quality (admissions selectivity, fellowships and prizes won, peer or press evaluations).The concept of education quality is considered next to the concept of the learning process quality. Since the learning process belongs to the real of a specific education system, there is a triad formed – the education

system quality, the learning process quality and the outcome quality (Figure 1). Consequently, the outcome quality reflects the quality of the education system and the learning process that in fact, were designed to reach the desired outcome (Chernova and Shchipanov, 2004).

Any-specialist education content is shaped by the State Compulsory Educational Standard and the Principal Education Program (PEP). Each PEP requires methodological support. The essence and content of Social Pedagogy as a separate branch of pedagogical knowledge and a type of professional activity have been developed to the most complete form in Germany. Education programs analysis allows assuming that Germany was the place, where social worker and counselor were divided into separate specializations. Kazakhstan has approved the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 338 dated July 13, 2009 on the Approval of the Model Qualification Characteristics of Positions Held by Teaching Staff and Persons Equated to Them (Registered in the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan on August 17, 2009 under No. 5750). From these requirements, we can single out the major areas of the counselor's activity in Kazakhstan: social and teaching activity, solving child's personal and social problems; psychological, medical and instructional support of social assistance; coordinating patronage operations and operations in providing housing, benefits, pensions and respect for property/non-property rights of orphans, children without parental care, children with disabilities, etc.

According to the research conducted by A.A. Bulatbaeva, A.K. Mynbayeva and Sh.T. Taubayeva, graduates are employed mainly in kindergartens, schools, orphanages and social services (Bulatbaeva et al., 2016).Researchers speaking about methodological support often use different terminology – integrating methodological support, course (specialty) teaching package, learning kit, etc. They reduce the content of methodological support to the learning and teaching support material applicable to a specific course, not covering the entire PEP. There is a little number of studies devoted to the content of methodological support of the PEP, but they do not lay scientific grounds for its content and structure as for a pedagogical phenomenon. Yu.L. Kamasheva defines two approaches to defining the concept of methodological support: supporters of the first one understand the concept of methodological support as a package of guidance documents, while the supporters of the second one – as an instructional tools (Kamasheva, 2008).

Based on the integration of these approaches, we shall consider methodological support of the PEP as a package of guidance documents and tools grounding the rational learning content and the teaching methodology. Therefore, the quality should be assessed with regard to that part of the methodological support that is designed by the university independently. At the same time, instructional tools are indirectly addressed during the assessment of guidance documents.

3. METHODOLOGY

Each university and higher educational establishment usually develops its own map of the learning process quality monitoring and control and approves the procedure for its organization.

For example, ENQA suggests conducting focus group research and polls with a focus laid on the following particular parameters, such as the level of student/graduate satisfaction with the:

1. Scientific and professional content of courses and seminars;

2. Teaching methods;

3. Student evaluation methods;

4. Administrative services;

5. Teaching staff prestige;

6. Rewards (others than grades) (Nicolescu and Dima, 2010).

Massy (1996) emphasizes that teaching and learning process can be evaluated in terms of five sub-processes, each thereof illustrated by questions that might be asked of institutions, faculties, departments or employees. However, these questions are not applicable to all of them in any particular situation. Nevertheless, they can become a benchmark for organizing the process of managerial processes improvement. In this light, we adapted these sub-processes for our research as follows to improve managerial processes.

1. Curriculum design (processes reviewed and improved to design curricula): How is the course content supplemented with regard to employer demands, current grades and outcomes that previous students had? What are the actions of the department and faculty? How are the various design inputs integrated? How are controversies resolved? How are the internal integration relations provided?

2. Pedagogical design (process improved by teaching and learning methods applied): How often and full do teachers apply pedagogical methods? How broad is the definition of 'pedagogical method'? Have pedagogical methods been the subject of innovation? Have they been changed over time (for example, to incorporate more active as opposed to passive learning)? Do they take sufficient advantage of information technology?

3. Implementation quality (processes driven by how well the faculty members perform their teaching duties): How broad is the definition of 'teaching'? Does it include out-of-class student contact (including advising) and student assessment (including feedback about the assessments)? What are the incentives for good teaching? What are the disincentives? How are teaching evaluations utilized? Are they shared among faculty as part of a mutual-improvement process?

4. Outcomes assessment (how do staff and departments monitor student outcomes and link the assessments to improve

the teaching and learning processes): How often and full do scientific units use traditional types of assessment methods to evaluate the teaching and learning effectiveness? How often and full do scientific units use non-traditional assessment methods? Do scientific units feel responsible for promptly making changes identified by assessment as needed?

5. Resource provision (human, technical and financial resources needed for quality): How are recourses allocated to achieve and assure teaching and learning quality? How do staff recruitment processes promote and safeguard the quality of teaching and learning? How does the institution's incentive and reward environment further its teaching and learning quality agenda? How full does the institution offer technical assistance and training to staff who wish to improve the quality of their teaching? How full are these resources utilized by staff?

In the light of the above, we designed a learning process as seen by a student questionnaire, which consisted of an instructive block and 17 items grouped under the following blocks:

- General satisfaction with how the learning process is organized;

- Satisfaction with the quality of teaching;

- Satisfaction with the quality of individual activity organized and the system of its assessment;

- Satisfaction with scheduling and the amount of other types of extracurricular activities involved.

Student poll involved 65 students of the Philology: Kazakh Language Department and 30 students of the Philology: Russian Language Department (Al-Farabi Kazakh National University). These were the second-and-third-year students majoring in Social Pedagogy and Self-Knowledge. There was no significant difference found in the answers given by the respondents of different departments. Therefore, results are combined. We also developed a questionnaire for the department staff responsible for producing highly skilled future counselors. Teacher poll was aimed at identifying whether the teaching staff has the sense of the strengths and weaknesses of their graduates, as well as at identifying the problems of quality assurance in education. Teachers and senior teachers with an experience up to 10 years were the most active respondents. The average age of respondents is 35 years. The total number of respondents is 17 people.

4. RESULTS

Let us provide the results of student polling. The question Are you satisfied with the quality of the learning process at the university? was answered Yes, Indeed by the majority of respondents (78.5%), 14% were satisfied to a degree, 6% were not sure and 1.5% were not satisfied at all. The question How satisfied are you with the resource base of the university? implies several indicators. Thus, 50% of

respondents were satisfied with the availability of librarian textbooks
and university computers for performing individual activities, as well
as with the seating capacity of the reading room. The results indices
were obtained for the availability of training equipment (43.1%) and
necessary guides (44.6%). Complete data are in Table 1.

Table 1. Feedback on Satisfaction with the Resource Base of the
University

Indicator	Satisfied	Partially Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Not Sure
Availability of textbooks in the library	53.8 % (35)	30.8 % (20)	7.7% (5)	7.7% (5)
Availability of guides in the library	44.6% (29)	49.2% (32)	3.1% (2)	3.1% (2)
Availability of electronic training aids	47.7% (31)	46.2% (30)	4.6% (3)	1.5% (1)
Availability of computers for class activities	46.2% (30)	41.5% (27)	10.8% (7)	1.5% (1)
Availability of university computers for individual activity after classes	50.8% (33)	44.6% (29)	4.6% (3)	0
Seating capacity of the reading room	66.2% (43)	24.6% (16)	7.7% (5)	1.5% (1)
Classroom condition	47.7% (31)	30.8% (20)	13.8% (9)	7.7% (5)
Availability of training equipment	43.1% (28)	24.6% (16)	20% (13)	12.3% (8)

Illustrated answers (Figure 1) indicate high percentage of
delivered expectations of learning.

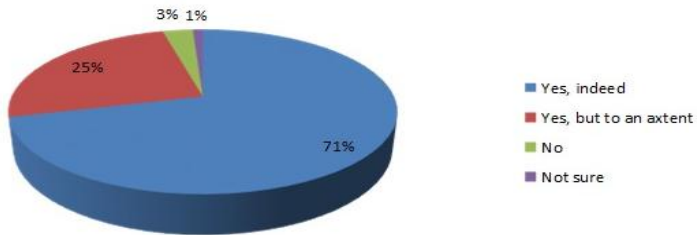**Does the learning process deliver expectations?**

Figure 1. Feedback on How Far the Learning Process Delivers
Expectations

The following questions were asked to assess student satisfaction with the quality of teaching and identify the most popular courses.

The students are highly satisfied with the teacher's quality of being tactful (76.9%), with content originality (73.9%) and with its capacity to boost student achievements (75.4%). At this point, we should also point to the fact that a high percentage of rather Yes answers was recorded in relation to the active teaching methods and a clear system of requirements for individual activity. Complete data are in Figure 2.

The question **Which course content would you like to extend by adding in-class units (lectures and seminars)**?was answered basically with:

• Special Pedagogy,

- Deviantology,

- Socio-Pedagogical Training,

- Socio-Pedagogical Excellence,
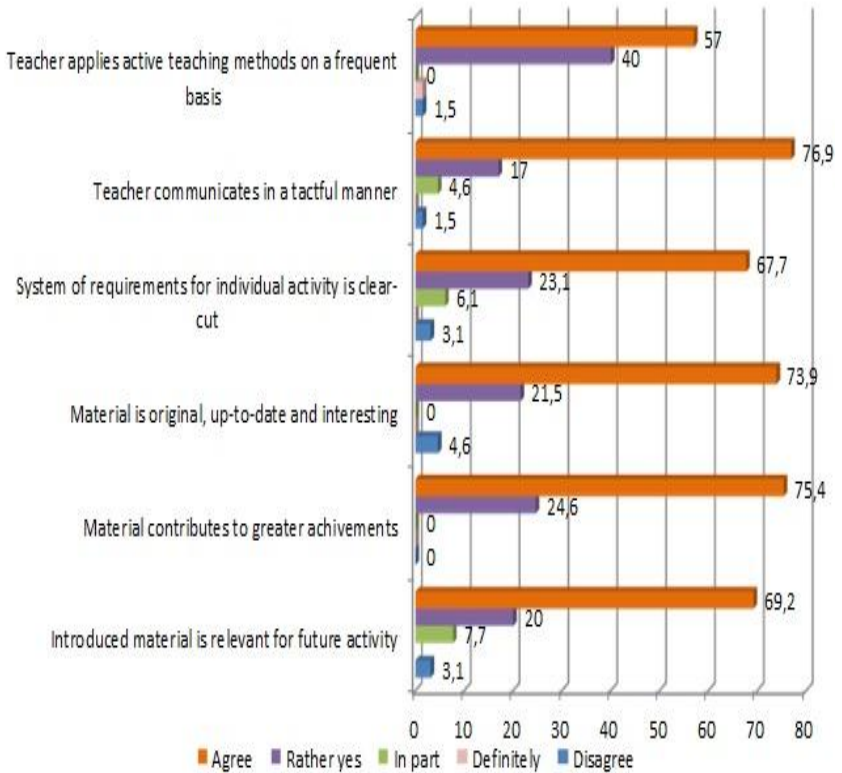
- Penitentiary Pedagogy.

Figure 2. Quality of Teaching Subjects as Seen by Students

Students wrote the following reasons for increasing the number of in-class units – 92% of respondents indicated that introduced material would come in hand during the future professional activity, while the remaining 8% claimed that they fail to understand the material in fixed time.

The question What courses would you like to take with more practical training sessions? was answered as follows:

- Socio-pedagogical technologies of working with children;

- Socio-pedagogical counseling;

- Psycho-pedagogical diagnostics;

- Social Pedagogy.

The third block of items was touching the individual activity organization and the assessment system. Figure 3 shows resources most commonly used by students during their individual activities. One can take note of the fact that teachers do not promote the application of other means (research papers, databases, manual analysis, etc.).

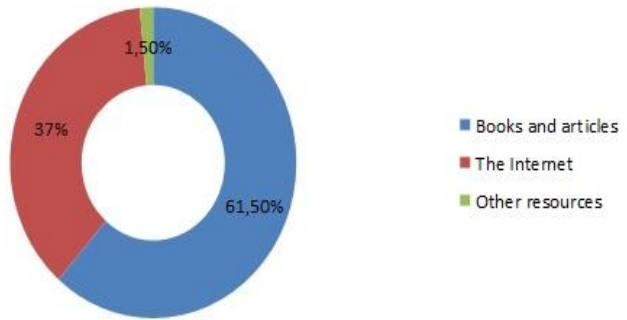# What are the most typical resources used during individual activity?

Figure 3. Chart of Resources applied by Students during Individual

activity

At the same time, the question Do you think that the existing system for individual activity assessment is objective enough and fair? (Figure 4) received the following answers: Yes, Indeed – 48%; Computer Based Testing Would be Better – 38%; Assessment Criteria are Obscure – 12.5 %.

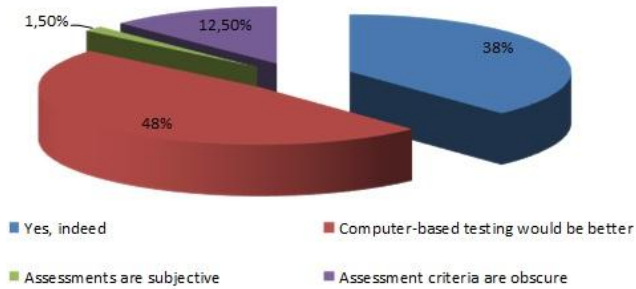## Are you satisfied with the system of individual activity assessment?

Figure 4. Satisfaction with Individual Activity Assessment System

The fourth block was dedicated to student satisfaction with the scheduling. The question Are you satisfied **with your schedule**? was answered Yes, Indeed by 53 respondents (81.5%) and No by 12 students (18.5%).

At this point, we tried to identify the amount of free time that these students have for making projects and conducting research. We found out that 43% of respondents combine their job and study at times, while 57% of respondents have no job to interfere their schedule. The majority of respondents receive the information necessary for learning through the university website (52%), while 43% of respondents indicate that they address the information resources of the university once in a way.

At the same time, 20% of respondents are highly interested in individual researching, while 46% of respondents would like the same, but have a dread of loads. Only 34% of students indicated a lack of desire to conduct research activities individually. In most cases, 20% of them indicated a lack of time as a reason for having no desire, 7% indicated that such an activity is not interesting and 7% − that teachers do not request such.

The teacher poll revealed some features no less interesting. As the most important and leading factor affecting the quality of education at the university, 27% of teachers indicated the management quality, 25% − the interaction with the labor market at the stage of learning content design; 18% − quality of enrolments and students; 17% − teaching technologies and methodological support; 13% − quality of teaching staff.

As the main strengths and virtues fostered in graduates, 58% of teachers chose the following combination of characteristics from the list:

- High level of theoretical knowledge;

- High handling competence;

- Readiness to respond quickly in unusual situations;

- High level of general culture and morality.

As weaknesses or disadvantages of producing graduates, the following combination of characteristics was chosen:

- Low motivation to perform;

- Weak performance;

- Lack of desire for self-development and self-education

The majority of teachers (63%) answered the question What, in your opinion, process-driven problems should be solved first? (select up to 5 options)as follows:

- Weak assessment system;

- Classroom condition and procurement with modern equipment;

- Poor accounting of consumer/graduate demands;

- Imperfect incentive mechanism;

- Student discipline problems.

Almost 85% of teachers recognize their contribution to the education quality development in that they take part in designing textbooks and teaching aids, 63% − in following the guidance papers (syllabus, testing and assessment materials, etc.) Only 35% indicated their contribution through designing and applying active teaching

technologies and methods, and 25% – through participation in research projects.

At the same time, the majority of teachers (53%) indicate a lack of resource and information base for conducting high-quality research. In general, 77% of teachers are satisfied with the conditions provided for competence development and teaching, including the schedule. Only 23% of respondents indicated a shortage of scientific internships.

5. DISCUSSION

In general, research results indicate a general student/teacher satisfaction with the quality of the learning process organization in the university. However, they also reveal that not only motivation and internal factors affect the quality of teaching, but also a number of external factors.

A number of researchers, in particular Ashraf et al. (2009), point that higher-education quality will be achieved by changing the teaching/learning and assessment methods, by constantly updating the curricula, updating and improving the professional knowledge and skills of teachers and by giving access to a broad educational, administrative and resource environment. Tang and Hussin (2011) identified independent factors affecting the quality of education: teacher qualifications that impact teaching and learning effectiveness, student development and safety, academic and support facilities, and

the university status. Research results show that instructional tools and brochures necessary for learning the practice-driven details of the future professional activity are of greatest demand among students. In this regard, they point to a lack of guides in the library and the lack of equipment in laboratories. Teachers also indicate a weak technical capacity of classrooms. In addition, university should address the methodological support of individual activity, namely – lay out the expected outcomes and design the assessment criteria. At this point, the establishment has to strengthen the practice of teacher training, mutual learning and analyzing the content of designed independent tasks. The next aspect is touching the application of active teaching methods. Students are little satisfied with it, so as the teachers (only 17% of them tie the quality of education with this aspect). Although the content of socio-pedagogical training points to an abundance of interactive and art-therapeutic techniques, students feel that teachers should step up in this direction. The above problems are lined up with the answers on preferred courses, which are centered on practice.

In terms of improving the methodological support quality, the next most important aspect is a matter of content saturation of tasks for individual activity. Teacher poll revealed that these tasks are not about research, although the university presents itself as a research university. This is a significant drawback in terms of meaningful saturation in vocational training. In this aspect, advanced training courses are required, so as the additional incentive mechanisms for assignment re-designers and inquiry-based learning technology learners. Student polling provided generally the following feedback:

The number of practical training sessions should be not only increased, but also supported with practice at school, real cases and specific tools intended for school counselors. There should be a single clear-cut system (for each subject) of individual activity assessment with minimized subjectivity. There should be a new concept for lecture delivering. The teachers asked for expanding the internship infrastructure and the circle of employers participating in the content design. It is necessary to think over a mechanism for stimulating such participation. The student culture of understanding their own responsibility for learning outcomes should be strengthening. Thus, research results reveal the major problems in methodological support of assuring the quality of counselor education. Some of them might be not relevant for foreign practice, but they do reflect the specific features of local education. One will also probably fail to design a single pattern for assessing the individual activity because of the specific subject-driven features, the specific features of original course design, etc. Nevertheless, teachers still have to understand these criteria, as well as the assessment system openness and transparency.

6. CONCLUSION

The research analyzes the theory of the issue, provides a research methodology design, and generalizes the student/teaching polling results on their satisfaction with the quality of the education program implementation collected in the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. Recommendations were introduced. Poll participants

expressed different opinions, but the majority believes that the quality of education is dictated by the labor market demand for graduates and their strong competitive ability. Student recommendations are to manage the in-class education effectively, to design high-quality course content and to provide a well-supported infrastructure that would meet student expectations. Since the counselor education content and technology are changing very quickly, the university has to forecast the labor market situation. Since counselor as a profession is interdisciplinary in nature, subject content should be designed with regard to changes in healthcare, military education, social protection, etc.

In general, research results can be useful for education managers and university teachers to improve the counselor education content and technologies. Research results can ground the new special courses designed with regard to specific features of the region, most specifically with regard to the inflow of academic service providers from abroad.

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