

Mathematics Courses: Student approach

Teresė Leonavičienė, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Saulėtekio av.11, Vilnius, Lithuania, teresebrazauskaite@gmail.com
Grazvydas Leonavičius, Vilnius Pedagogical University, Studentų str. 39, Vilnius, Lithuania, matem@vpu.lt

Recently the analysis of the quality of studies at Lithuanian universities is the focus of attention. However, the quality can be determined in more than one way. It can be perceived as the activity of a higher school [1]; conditions for individual development, i.e. services provided within the community [2]; a set of attributes indicating that the needs of graduates, employers and the community have been met [3]. Anyway, the quality of studies is an integral part of the process of studying. According to P. Ramsden, [4] the quality of studies could be evaluated giving the consideration whether the subject is being taught well and whether the teacher performs his work well. In other words, it is the evaluation of the efficiency of the studies.

The goal of this survey carried out among students was to answer the question whether the studies of mathematics are efficient. The students were asked to evaluate various mathematical courses delivered during the 1st – 7th semesters of their studies. Our aim was also to find out about the students' attitudes towards the curriculum of their studies: whether a student himself is interested in the subjects, whether he is searching for supplementary material, what reference sources he uses, whether he does his home tasks all by himself, and his assessment of the studies.

The accumulated evidence processed with the help of Programme SPSS 17 suggest that those high-school graduates who took an interest in mathematics, were good at it and used to get high grades while at school, choose mathematics studies. These positive attitudes are likely to have predetermined rather favourable evaluation of the subject (Spearman Correlation Coefficient is 0.593 – 0.628 with $\alpha=0.01$). The above mentioned evaluations could be considered equal (medium meanings score approximately 7.5 (mode is equal to 8 points) which means that mathematical subjects are considered to be rather interesting and useful during all the semesters (Friedman test $p=0.275$, $\alpha=0.01$). Since students enjoy the subject they are studying, they take an active part in the process of studying and as many as 70% of the students quite or very often search for the material on the relevant mathematical issues all by themselves. They are also using various IT programmes (~84% of the students). 54% of the students reported that home tasks are very useful and of utmost importance while 46% of the students admit they are useful.

Summing up the findings of the survey we can state that very positive attitudes prevail with regards to mathematical subjects; it predetermines the involvement of students and their desire to improve.

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