



SATISFACTION OF STUDENTS FROM THE STUDIED COURSES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ECONOMICS

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Abstract

Education is becoming more and more economic determinant of broad public importance. Bulgarian education should be based on European values and at the same time to build their own model, preserving its national specificity mastering ways of acquiring information, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

“Health Economics”, „Introduction to economic knowledge“ and “Health informatics” are main compulsory courses studied by specialties “Public Health and Health Management” and “Management of Healthcare” in the Faculty of Public Health at Medical University of Sofia.

The article presents the results of a survey among students concerning their opinion about the usefulness of the knowledge and skills acquired by the discipline and how they are applicable to their professional realization. Also the recommendations given by the students are taken into consideration for improving learning process.

Keywords: Students, studying, satisfaction.



INTRODUCTION

The modern processes of globalization in economics and education raise the current issue about quality of education. The interrelation of economies and societies, the uprising development of information technologies, the movement of capital that is freer definitely binds the prosperity of each country and individual with knowledge, technologies and learning capacity.

One of the basic challenges created by globalization is related to restructuring the economy for improving productivity and competitiveness. The maintenance of high educational and qualification potential of labour resources is important production growth factor. This is the Bulgarian case in the circumstances of its EU membership. The high quality of workforce is defined in the European Employment Strategy being the main factor for improving labour output and business competitiveness. The new economic realities highlight the qualitative improvement of the educational and training system, the higher education in particular (Gilpin R., 2003; Vodenicharova Al., 2015).

The process of acquiring particular educational and professional preparation could be defined as mechanism for turning the labour resource into production factor. I.e. the quality of labour resources depends on knowledge and skills, education and professional qualification and the efforts made for their acquisition. The basic factor for improving labour output and incomes of workers and employees are the investments in creating human capital. The time and funds invested for acquiring higher education are investments in human capital.

Education is turning into ever increasing economic determinant of great public significance. Bulgarian education should be developed onto European values and at the same time it should construct its own model while keeping its national identity and assimilating the ways for acquiring information, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes (Zlatanova T., 2015).

One of the most complicated issues in all countries is about the ways of funding healthcare to achieve highest public and individual benefit. Each healthcare system operates within the resources it has. The majority of healthcare institutions work in the circumstances of continuous shortage of funding that necessitates précising their costs and setting policies for the optimization of their disbursement. In this meaning the subjects "Health economics", "Introduction in economic knowledge", "Financial management in healthcare" and "Health informatics" whose action perimeter is aimed at analysing and managing financial cash flows, and the decisions are related to finding capitals and using them, play ever more important role and become more and more pressing. These are basic mandatory disciplines studied by the speciality "Public health and health management" and "Management of Healthcare" in the Faculty of Public Health to the Medical University - Sofia.

Education has economic influence not only on labour markets, but also direct impact on the production process being the source of new technologies. In the 21st century – the century of information technologies when life is full of numerous transformations in all social areas, the requirements for realization of human capital naturally undergo changes. The capacities for critical thinking, teamwork ability, resources management are areas in which many stakeholders are interested as requirement for successful socialization. In the new situation it is important for the students to see the applicability of what they study. Educational system should be transformed and upgraded, highlight shifts from what the lecturer teaches to what and how the student learns (Peeva K., 2013; www.ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/f1198_en.pdf, 2007).

The purpose of this article is analysing the results of the inquiry among the students in public health concerning their opinion on the benefit of the acquired knowledge and skills during the studied subjects in the Department of Health Economics and the degree of their applicability for their professional realization. Additionally, we considered the recommendations provided by the students of both specialities on improving the learning process.

METHODOLOGY

In order to collect primary information we inquired 100 students-bachelors in anonymous manner from the specialities “Public health and health management” and “Management of health cares” in the Faculty of Public Health to the Medical University – Sofia in January and February 2016. The quantitative analyses were performed with the statistical package of applicable programmes – SPSS, and the interpretation manner reflects the theoretical material adapted to the programme package.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On the grounds of in-depth comprehensive analysis of the opinion expressed by the students of public health on the quality and their satisfaction from their studies we got the following results:

The average age of the inquired students was 30.52, 42% were full-time students and 58% - part-time. 61% were sophomores and 31% - freshmen. The distribution of students in view of their majors was the following:

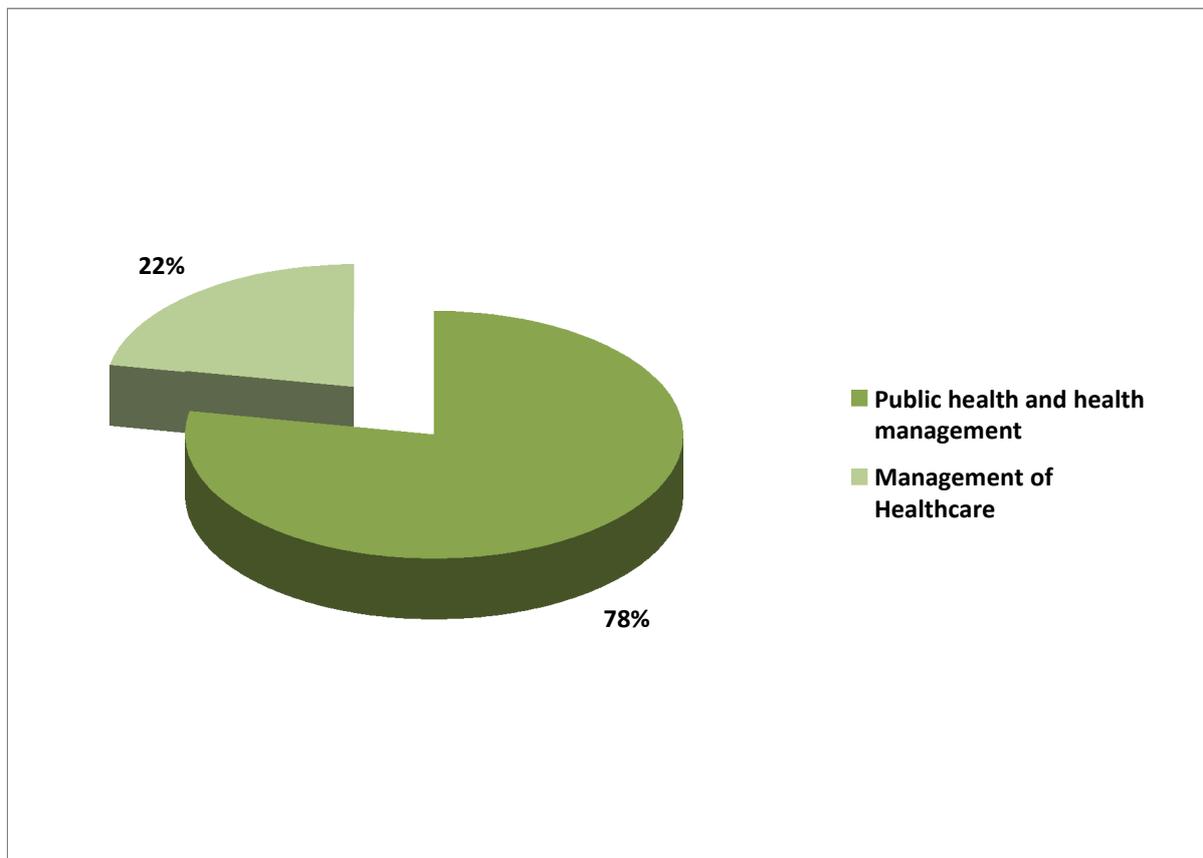


Figure 1: Separation of students according to specialties

Figure 2 shows that the most of the students (80%) had visited between 80-100% of the lectures held in the Department for Health Economics (Figure 2), and around 95% said they were satisfied with the tutoring quality concerning the studied subjects.

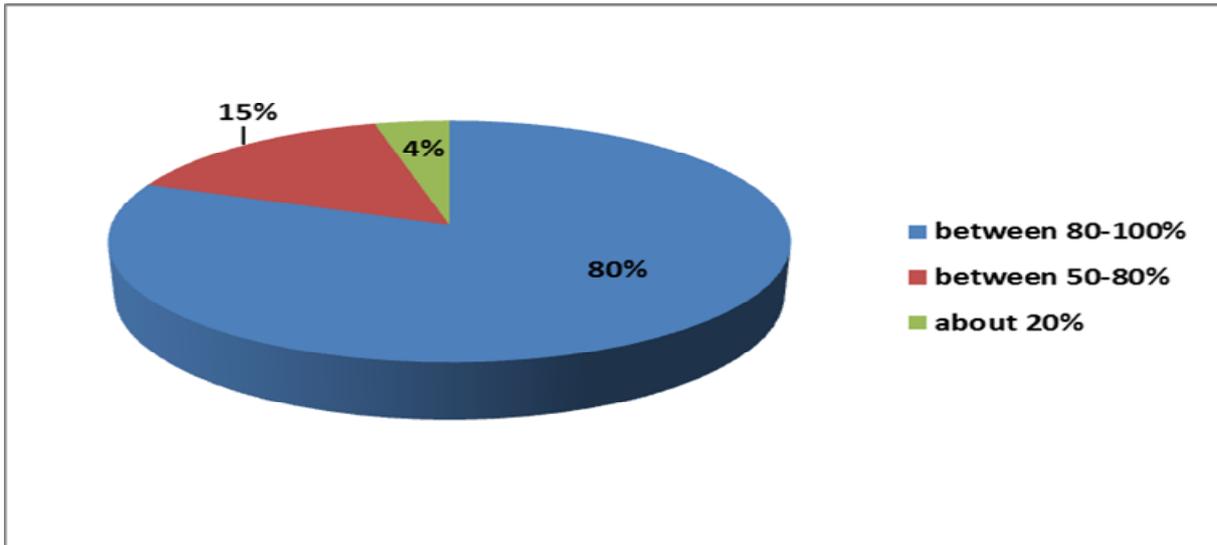


Figure 2: Percentage of students visiting lectures by courses studied in the Department of Health Economics

We consider students' opinion is an important component for the comprehensive assessment of education and essential human resource for the operations of the healthcare system. In this connection we asked them what they liked about learning the abovementioned subjects and what could be improved according to them. Most of the students were satisfied with the practical direction of subjects and the fact that learning includes materials from various areas, namely from the area of the general economic science and its implementation in healthcare, hospital management, financial management in healthcare, information systems in healthcare etc. This way they will be prepared as specialists for broad range of realizations and this will help them adapt in easier and faster manner to the changing social, economic and health environment and to the development of market economy and labour market.

Another reason because of which the inquired students like learning the subjects led by Health Economics Department for the well-structured and tutored in understandable manner material. Half of the inquired were of the opinion that individual work assigned by the lecturers is sufficient, with high relative share of those that hesitated and could not say (30%). Nevertheless 18% of the students believed that more individual work had to be assigned and greater activity was to be required from the students (Figure 3). In view of improving the learning process they recommended arranging more practical classes to assimilate the material easily.

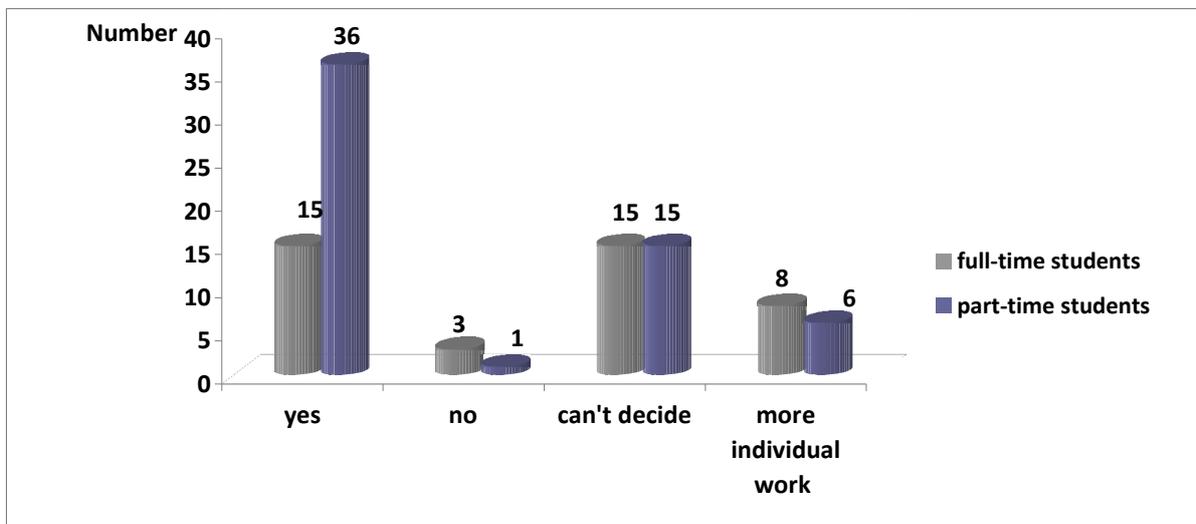


Figure 3: Opinion of students regarding the amount of individual work

The necessity continuous learning throughout the semester for getting good grades is evidenced by the results on the next figure. A part of 90% of the students were on the opinion that it was not enough to study only before the exam.

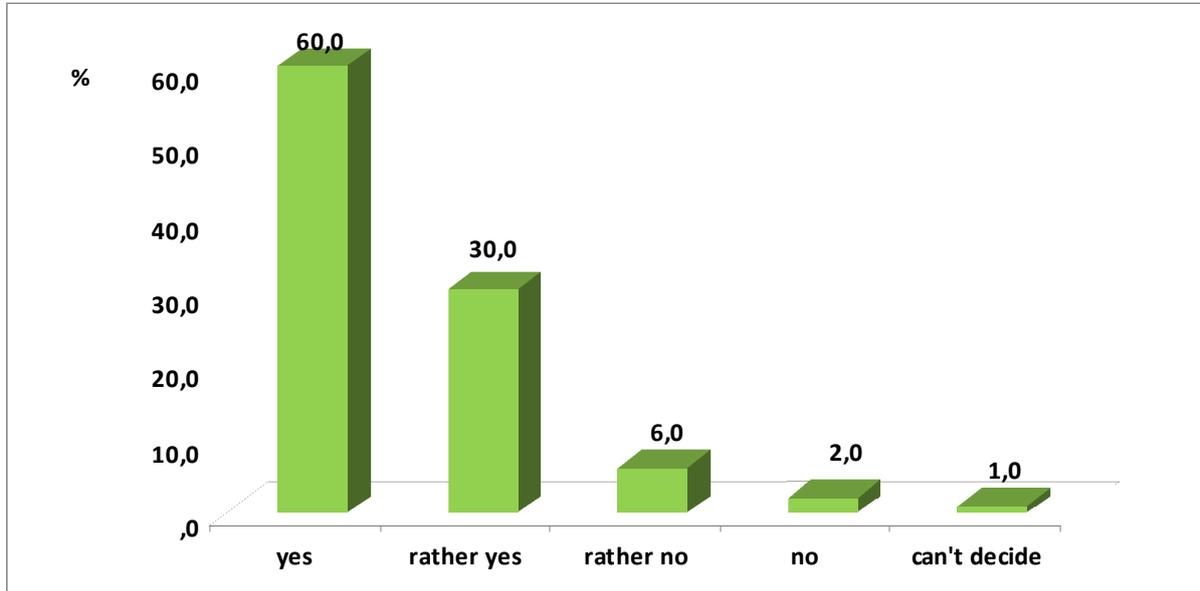


Figure 4: Percentage of students thinking that for having better marks is not enough to learn just before exam

The great interest on behalf of the students is also manifested by the fact that more than half of all students would like to get additional knowledge, in addition to the material included in the curriculum of the studied subject – mainly as additional literature concerning the studied issues that would promote their better professional achievements in the future. As you could see, acquiring additional knowledge is the wish of most part-time students, which is probably due to the fact that most of them work and they need these skills and knowledge in their daily life.

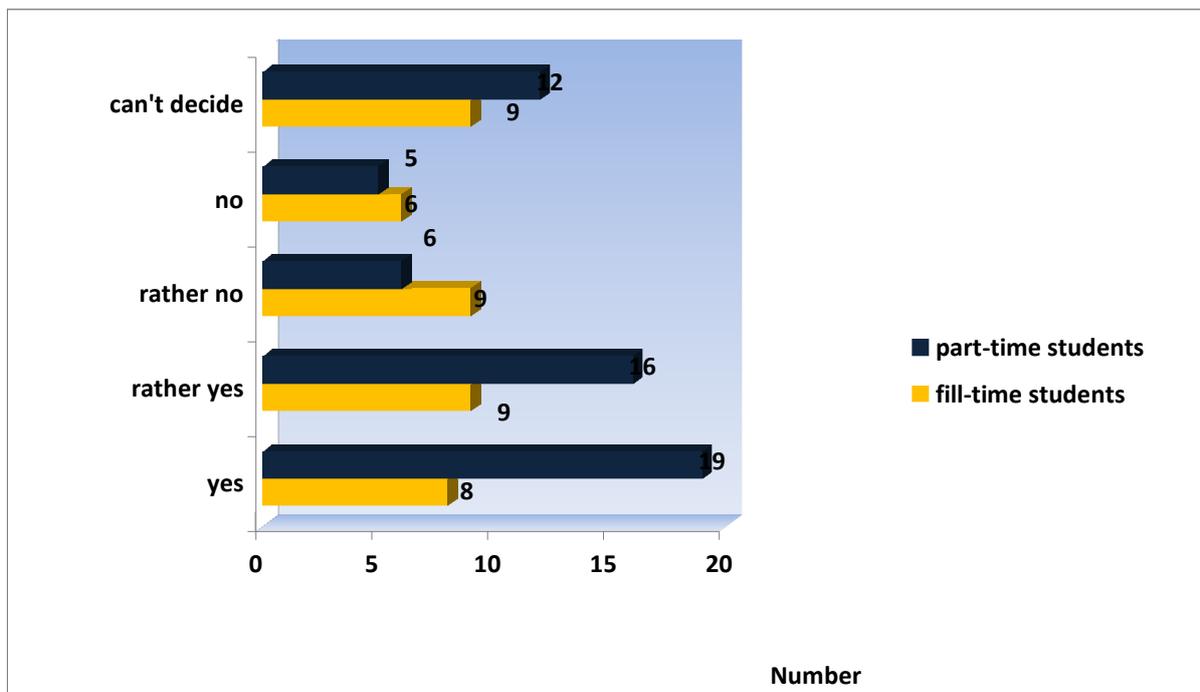


Figure 5: Relative share of students seeking to obtain additional knowledge in studied subjects



CONCLUSION

In modern Bulgaria the assurance of quality education for the health managers at all levels is a key factor for the development and effective operations of the healthcare system, for achieving high level of healthcare for our population. That is why European criteria for quality education should be implemented to ensure the process of adequate assessment with follow-up assurance, maintenance and improvement of quality in higher degrees of education for public health and health management (Iliev Ts., 2009).

In order to get effective higher educational system we should synchronize the market needs for labour resources and the higher educational system development, i.e. synchronization of curricula with the labour market needs. This way we will prepare employees in conformity with the need of improving competitiveness of European economy.

Seen the results from the performed inquiry we concluded that in general students are satisfied with the subjects being studied in the Department for Health Economics since they acquire important knowledge and skills that result directly in optimizing healthcare management. This in turn promotes their development as health politicians, managers and specialists of high managerial competencies and knowledge mainly related to market principles of healthcare functioning; the modern methods of industry structures' management; regulations that provide for the relations between the components of the healthcare system; coping with the conflicts present within the industry etc.

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