

Adriana Wiegerová, Alena Lampertová

## What do students think about democratization in the Slovak Republic

The conclusions of the pre-research were presented last year at the conference in Kiten. The pre-research was the feedback to the offer to carry out the international comparative research among Slavonic countries on the issues of humanization and democratization at universities. This year, the next sections of the research efforts could be submitted together with the modifications which need to be done and implemented in Slovakia.

A standardized questionnaire with 21 questions should find out the status of humanization and democratization of pedagogical processes at universities was available for research purposes. The structured item questionnaire was made up for international comparative purposes in the cooperation of Prof. Rangelova from Bulgaria with Prof. Smancer from Belarus in 2008. Particular questions (items) have not been changed but they have been modified for research purposes. The standardized questionnaire was delivered to Slovakia in Russian and it was translated and also stylistically modified. These modifications may also partially change the meaning of the ascertained phenomenon. To verify this research tool the pre-research was carried out in June 2009 with the research sample of 19 students of the first grade of the same branch. Each student completed the questionnaire by him/herself but they were together in the same room. Consequently the acquired results were processed and analyzed. The results achieved led to the questionnaire modification lying in several following points:

- A. the research focused only on students, not on teachers
- B. it monitored only one phenomenon, in this case, the democratization
- C. the questionnaire was extended by the so-called thematic units
- D. complementary methods were selected for the research project (projection technique and a non-structured interview)

At the end of February 2010 the research project provided with newly set postulates was launched. The main pillars of the questionnaire were the thematic units represented by the following questions:

1. What is the democratization of education in the student's view?

2. How do the respondents perceive the democratization of education at universities?
3. Participation of students in the university life.
4. Students and their "democratic" study.

### Aims of the research were as follows:

1. To find the students' opinions about the democratization of the pedagogical process at universities.
2. To find whether the students influence the democratization of the pedagogical process at their own university.
3. To map the possibilities of improving the process of democratization at universities.

The research sample comprised 122 students of the first and the second grades of the bachelor's and the master's degree of study and the Faculty of Education of Comenius University in Bratislava studying the branch Pre-school and Elementary Pedagogy. In concrete terms there were 30 students of the first grade and 31 students of the second grade of the bachelor's study and 30 students of the first grade and 31 students of the second grade of the master's study. The selection of respondents was intentional.

In its introduction the questionnaire is finding out why the respondents chose the branch they really study at the university. Surprisingly, Diagram 1 shows the fact that only 52% of respondents chose the Faculty of Education because they enjoy the study and they wish to be devoted to it in their future careers. However, this option won the most votes, which is gratifying. The second option, in the terms of answers frequency is the option – "I want a diploma and this choice is the optimal for me" – 25%. Almost one quarter of respondents study the chosen branch only with the aim to get the diploma.

Diagram 2 and Diagram 3 show the diversity of answers between the respondents of the bachelor's and the master's study. The most frequent answer of the bachelor's

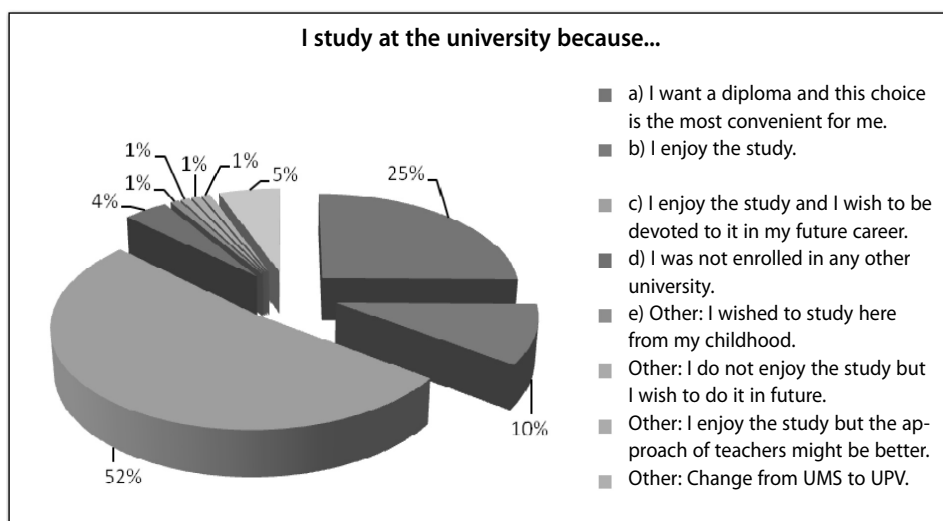


Diagram 1. The reasons of students for choosing their university

study respondents was – “I enjoy the study and I wish to be devoted to it in my future career” (59%). The respondents of the master’s study also gave this option the highest number of votes, but the percentage is lower (44%).

Besides other issues, the aim of the research project was to find out the opinions of the students of the Faculty of Education of Comenius University about the status of democratization of the pedagogical process at their university. Also the selection

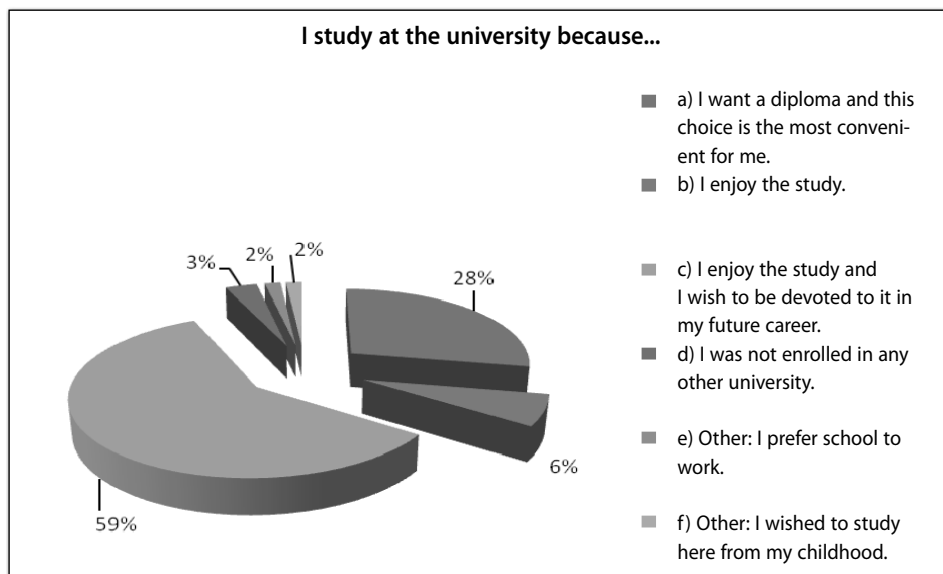


Diagram 2. The reasons of students of the bachelor’s study for choosing their university

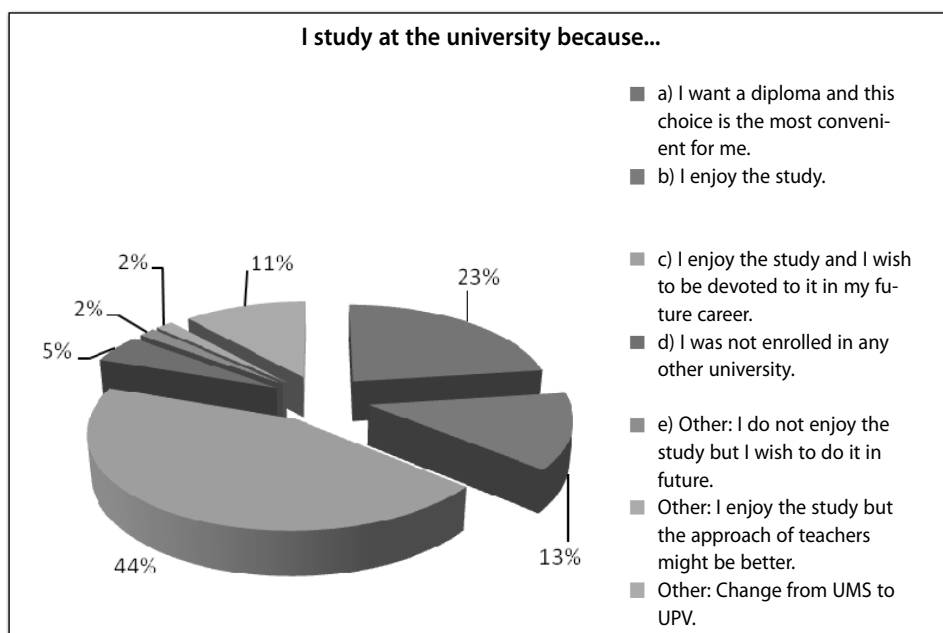


Diagram 3. The reasons of the students of the master’s study for choosing their university

of complementary methods is important for a more profound knowledge of answers to given questions. Hence the complementary method – the project method, namely the constructive method is used in the research. Five students (quite voluntarily) were given the task to write an essay on the topic: “What does the democratization of education mean to you?” They might describe their idea of “ideal” democratization of education, pros and cons of the current situation in the democratization of education in Slovakia, abroad etc. Simply, they wrote anything they were thinking of. Enclosure C provides the students essays. This complementary method enriches the first question from questionnaire testing the ideas of the respondents of the democratization of education. The acquired numerical data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Variants of respondents’ answers to the question what they perceive under the set phrase the democratization of education

Variants of answers	BC.		MGR.		TOTAL
	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	
Right to express his/her own opinion freely.	4	11	9	4	28
Right to education for all regardless of their religion, sex, race, financials etc.	6	10	7	15	38
Student will choose the school according to his/her interests and he/she studies the branch he/she is interested in.	16	7	6	9	38
Student participates in university activities and influences them	1	–	9	7	17
Emancipation of students.	3	–	–	–	3
Students’ capability of modifying the study to a certain extent.	1	1	–	–	2
Free choice of courses.	–	2	1	5	8
Education is a matter of the teacher and the student jointly intervening in it and influencing one another.	1	3	–	1	5
Student’s word counts.	1	–	–	–	1
Joint setting and observing certain rules.	–	2	–	2	4
Democratic relation between the teacher and the student.	–	–	2	2	4
Possibility of studying abroad.	–	–	–	1	1
Possibility of choosing a teacher.	–	–	–	1	1
I do not know, I did not think about it.	1	1	–	–	2

The question what do the respondents perceive under the phrase the democratization of education was most frequently answered as – *the right to education for all regardless of their religion, sex, race, financials etc.* and with the same frequency also the option – *student will choose the school according to his/her interests and he/she studies the branch he/she is interested in.* Both options were chosen by 38 respondents, what is 15% for each answer from the total amount of 122 respondents by 31. Thus the perception of the democratization of education remains predominantly in a wider sense. Mainly these answers could be included into the truer perception of the democratization of education: *the possibility of the student to modify the study to a certain extent* (1.64%), *student participates in university activities and he/she influences them* (13.93%), *education is a question of the teacher and the student who together intervening in and mutually influencing it* (4.1%).

Within the complementary method to the question what does the democratization of education mean to you the questioned D. J. stated: *"the democratization of schools means to create appropriate conditions for each member of the society, namely for each pupil, teacher, director and to develop mutual relations among them and to create a good climate and conditions at school. In this way a good approach of a child towards school and education could be created"*. The respondent did not mention who should create appropriate conditions for the school democratization. However, she stated that she perceived the school democratization as a creation of appropriate conditions for all, which would create a good climate and would lead to pupils' motivation to learn. Thus, the questioned D. J. perceives the democratization as something positive. In the following section she deals with the person of a teacher in education.

In her essay the questioned P. G. proceeded from the definition of democracy, which is, in her view, *"a form of ruling where the highest power belongs to the people and is enforced either by a direct participation or through elected representatives"* Based on the definition she also states that in the democratization of education people should *"also express their views and contribute with their opinions and experience in the creation of the educational program"* From the above mentioned facts, the closer comprehension of the notion the democratization in education is evident as well. The questioned P. G. also emphasizes the involvement of experienced people from practice in the creation of educational program, and she also deals with the importance to focus on quality, but not quantity in the educational program. She finishes her essay with the following sentence, emphasizing the importance of participating in the university life, which means a closer comprehension of the democratization of education: *"Simply summarized, also the common people should intervene in the decision-making process of ministers – they influence our lives by their decisions, either positively or negatively (recently I have had a feeling that the negative influences predominate"*.

The questioned P. P. perceives the democratization of education as offered new possibilities, freedom of choice and expression of opinions. She interprets it as *"getting rid of the directive management at schools, which is important."* She also perceives the democratization of education as a positive aspect and according to the following words also in a wider view: *"For me the democratization of education means the extensive possibility of being educated in all respects and equally for everybody"*.

The last questioned D. M. perceived the democratization of education rather in a wider sense too because in her view the democratic education *"should be available*

for every person in an adequate extent and form, even for "the weakest" member of the society." According to the questioned D. M., the democratization of education means "a certain process of liberation and emancipation of education".

From the questionnaire emerged that the respondents perceived the democratization of education more in its wider sense. Using the project method, only one questioned person focused the attention to the importance of child's/pupil's/student's participation in education.

Table 2. Variants of respondents' answers to the question what they consider as democratic at the university

Variants of answers	BC.		MGR.		TOTAL
	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> grad	1 <sup>st</sup> grad	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	
Right to express his/her own opinion freely.	4	8	–	5	17
Various categories of applicants are enabled to study at the faculty regardless of their religion, sex, race, financials etc.	9	5	–	5	19
Creation of their own study routes.	5	1	–	3	9
Choice of optional courses.	1	6	9	7	23
Creation of timetable.	–	3	2	3	8
Scholarship granting.	–	1	–	–	1
Elections to Academic Senate.	–	4	–	7	11
Academic Senate.	2	–	2	3	7
Meetings of academics.	3	–	2	–	5
Questionnaires which the students complete as a feedback for teachers and the courses. attended	–	1	–	–	1
Faculty rules which should be observed both by students and teachers.	–	1	1	–	2
Student's rights.	1	–	–	–	1
To share the decision-making process referring to the study.	1	–	–	5	6
Equal chance of all applicants to be enrolled in the university.	–	–	1	6	7
The possibility of studying abroad.	–	–	–	1	1
Free of charge study.	–	–	1	1	2
Nothing.	–	2	5	6	13
I do not know.	–	3	4	–	7

The second question tests which concrete facts, according to the respondents, make the university they study at the democratic one. The question is open, thus the results are not given in percentage, but in a number of answers (Table 2). The respondents stated *the choice of optional courses* as the most frequent democratic feature of their university (18.85%). Other options with a higher number were *various categories of applicants are enabled to study at the faculty regardless of their religion, sex, race, financials etc.* (15.57%), *the right to express their own opinion freely* (13.93%) and *the elections to the Academic Senate* (9.02%). It is surprising that 10.66% of all respondents consider *nothing* as democratic at the university.

Another question in the Questionnaire tests if the rules at the university are set sufficiently clear in the view of the respondents. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The results of answers concerning the comprehensibility of rules set at the university

	BC.				MGR.				TOTAL	
	1 <sup>st</sup> grade		2 <sup>nd</sup> grade		1 <sup>st</sup> grade		2 <sup>nd</sup> grade			
Variants of answers	(pc)	(%)	(pc)	(%)	(pc)	(%)	(pc)	(%)	(pc)	(%)
a) yes	3	10	5	16.13	1	3.33	6	19.35	15	12.30
b) more yes than no	17	57.67	22	70.97	8	26.67	11	35.48	58	47.54
c) more no than yes	7	23.33	1	3.23	9	30	6	19.35	23	18.85
d) no	0	0	0	0	2	6.67	3	9.68	5	4.10
e) hard to say	3	10	3	9.67	10	33.33	5	16.14	21	17.21
TOTAL	30	100	31	100	30	100	31	100	122	100

In the first grade of the bachelor's study the respondents stated the option *more yes than no* as the most frequent answer (57.67%). This means that more than a half of the respondents understand the set rules of the university. It is gratifying that the rules are clear to them already in the first grade of the study.

The respondents from the second grade of the bachelor's study also stated the option *more yes than no* as the most frequent answer with the number 70.97%. The number of students understanding the set rules at the university increased in comparison with those who do not understand the rules; it is probably connected with more experience acquired during two years of study at the university.

The respondents of the first grade of the master's study are more pessimistic. 33.33% of the respondents could not exactly say if the set rules at the university are *clear* to them. 30% of the respondents think that the university rules are *more not clear than clear* to them. The third rank is given to the option *more yes than no* with 26.67%.

In the second grade of the master's study the respondents state the option *more yes than no* as the most frequent answer (35.48%). The options *yes* and *more no than yes* acquired 19.38% identically.

Almost a half of all respondents (47.54%) most frequently stated the option *more yes than no*. This means that almost a half of the respondents understand the rules of the study at the university. A positive fact is that only 4.10 % of the respondents have

a feeling that they do not understand the set rules of the study at the university. Of course, the ideal situation would be if this percentage variant were zero.

Comparing the answers with respect to the degree of study, the test of fit chi-square has been used to calculate the divergence of the acquired and the theoretical frequencies. At the beginning we specified the null hypothesis, and in case of its non-acceptance the alternative hypothesis. The null hypothesis corresponds to the theoretical expected frequency. If the value of the test criterion chi-square is smaller than the critical value, the null hypothesis is accepted. In reverse order, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The calculations and results for the bachelor's degree of study are presented in Table 4, and for the master's degree of study in Table 5.

H<sub>0</sub> – null hypothesis: The frequency of the students choosing particular variants of answers is the same.

H<sub>A</sub> – the alternative hypothesis: The frequency of the students choosing particular variants of answers is different.

Table 4. The principle of the test of fit chi-square for the bachelor's study respondents

Bc.	Monitored frequency (P)	Expected frequency (O)	P – O	(P – O) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(P - O)^2}{O}$
	8	12.2	-4.2	17.64	1.445901639
	39	12.2	26.8	718.24	58.87213115
	8	12.2	-4.2	17.64	1.445901639
	0	12.2	-12.2	148.84	12.2
	6	12.2	-6.2	38.44	3.150819672
TOTAL	61	61			77.1147541

P – Monitored frequency. O – The expected frequency responding to null hypothesis. The level of significance 0.05 was set in the text.

Table 5. The principle of the test of fit chi-square for the master's study respondents

Mgr.	Monitored frequency (P)	Expected frequency (O)	P – O	(P – O) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(P - O)^2}{O}$
	7	12.2	-5.2	27.04	2.216393443
	19	12.2	6.8	46.24	3.790163934
	15	12.2	2.8	7.84	0.642622951
	5	12.2	-7.2	51.84	4.249180328
	15	12.2	2.8	7.84	0.642622951
TOTAL	61	61			11.54098361

P – Monitored frequency. O – Expected frequency responding to null hypothesis.



The calculated value of the test criterion chi-square 11.54089 is higher than the critical value 9.488. That is why it is possible to reject the null hypothesis and to accept the alternative hypothesis.

In both cases we have accepted the alternative hypothesis stating that the frequency of students choosing the particular variants of answers is different. The frequency of individual options of the master's study respondents is spread more equally than the frequency of individual options of the bachelor's study respondents. The respondents from the bachelor's study positively gave the highest number of votes to the option *more yes than no*, which influenced the overall results, thus this option won the highest number of votes. We may observe that the set rules of the university are clearer to the bachelor's study respondents than to the master's study respondents.

The fourth question finds out the respondents' opinions about how does the possibility of being enrolled in the university (at which they study) differ in relation to various alumni/alumnae. The fourth question is the scale one; after rewriting basic data and finding the most frequent value (modus) and the mean value (median) from Table 6, we have completed particular scale values by the coefficients which are in Table 7. Tables with values which the respondents from particular grades attributed to particular alumni/alumnae are available in Enclosure D Question No. 4. Option "certainly yes" has the coefficient 5, option "yes" coefficient 4, option "to a certain extent yes" coefficient 3, option "almost not at all" coefficient 2 and option "not at all" coefficient 1.

Table 6. The results of respondents' answers to the question how the possibility of being enrolled in the university differs in relation to various alumni/alumnae

All grades	EVALUATION					T O T A L	Modus	Median
	5	4	3	2	1			
handicapped people	17	33	59	12	1	122	3	3
ethnic minorities representatives	39	52	25	6	0	122	4	4
ethnic majority representatives	61	48	11	2	0	122	5	4.5
various religions representatives	52	59	9	2	0	122	4	4
big cities inhabitants	84	32	5	0	1	122	5	5
inhabitants of small towns and villages	62	46	13	1	0	122	5	5
other sexual orientation people	65	39	16	2	0	122	5	5
men	92	28	2	0	0	122	5	5
women	93	29	0	0	0	122	5	5
people with low financial opportunities	25	34	48	13	2	122	3	3
people with high financial opportunities	84	22	16	0	0	122	5	5
athletes	69	46	7	0	0	122	5	5

Consequently, all frequencies of options were multiplied by particular coefficients and registered in tables after the multiples had been added and finally they were divided by the number of respondents. In case of the first grades it was divided by number 30 and in case of the second grades by number 31. Table 7 presents the results of all grades, thus the multiples were divided by the number of all respondents, i.e. by 122.

Table 7. The results of respondents' answers to the question how the possibility of being enrolled in the university differs in relation to various alumni/alumnae, multiplied by particular coefficients

All grades  OPINIONS	EVALUATION					T O T A L	Arithmetic mean
	5	4	3	2	1		
handicapped people	85	132	177	24	1	419	3.43
representatives of ethnical minorities	195	208	75	12	0	490	4.02
ethnical majority representatives	305	192	33	4	0	534	4.38
various religions representatives	260	236	27	4	0	527	4.32
big cities inhabitants	420	128	15	0	1	564	4.62
Inhabitants of small towns and villages	310	184	39	2	0	535	4.39
other sexual orientation people	325	156	48	4	0	533	4.37
men	460	112	6	0	0	578	4.74
women	465	116	0	0	0	581	4.76
people with low financial opportunities	125	136	144	26	2	433	3.55
people with high financial opportunities	420	88	48	0	0	556	4.56
athletes	346	184	21	0	0	551	4.52

Median, arithmetic mean and modus were used to interpret the data acquired. Median expresses the estimation of the mean value. It is not influenced by extreme values. It minimizes the absolute error which might occur in the arithmetic mean. Arithmetic mean also determines the mean value and is calculated as a sum of all values divided by their number. Modus is the most frequently occurred value, thus it is possible to find out which option won the highest number of votes.

It is evident from Table 7 that from alumni/alumnae the best values accomplished both men and women, so we may say that sex plays no role in the possibility of being enrolled in the Faculty of Education. In both cases modus and median were 5, this means the answer *certainly yes*. Results in categories – big cities inhabitants and inhabitants of small towns and village were similar. No noticeable differences were found. Median and modus in both groups of applicants was 5, this means the option *certainly yes*. The fact whether the study applicants come from big or small towns or from villages does not influence the decision whether they will be enrolled in the Faculty of Education.

The ethnic majority representatives achieved modus 5 – *certainly yes* and the ethnic minority representatives modus 4 – *yes*. The difference is one value, this means it is not noticeable, but for some respondents the ethnic majority representatives have a higher chance to be enrolled in the university than the ethnic minority representatives. Value results of various religions representatives were similar to the category of the representatives of ethnic minorities. It is positive that according to the results the applicant's sexual orientation does not influence the enrolment in the university.

A large difference could be seen between people with low and high financial opportunities (Diagram 4). According to the respondents people with higher financial opportunities have a higher possibility of being enrolled in the university than people with low financial opportunities. For people with lower financial opportunities the respondents often stated the option 3 – *to the certain extent yes* and for people with high financial resources they stated option 5 – *certainly yes*.

The results of the questionnaire showed that in this question the interview will be necessary for a better understanding of the data acquired. In the complementary method of the non-structured interview the questioned D. J. stated: *"I do not have personal experiences with bribes at school or something similar. But simply I have a feeling that one has more opportunities for everything if he/she has got money."* Another questioned D. M. said: *"Higher financial opportunities may mean buying study literature, which makes a better preparation possible. But it is not the decisive moment; the most important is whether one wants to be enrolled in the university."*

So, the results do not have to mean the fact that the student will pay his/her place at the university. To a certain extent, it rather indicates the approach of respondents towards the given issue. Finally, in the interview all five students concluded that if the study applicant wants and studies he/she is enrolled in the Faculty of Education, which does not depend on money.

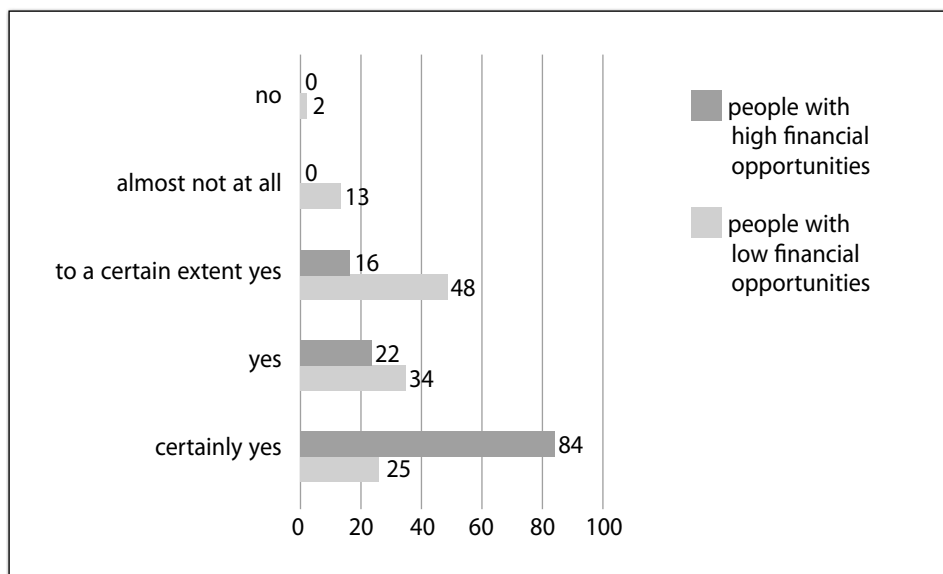


Diagram 4. The difference between the applicants for the study with low and high financial opportunities

The handicapped people achieved the worst results. The arithmetic mean has the value 3.43, but median specifies the mean value to option 3 – *to a certain extent yes*. *Option to a certain extent yes* is also the most frequent option. After completing the questionnaires in the non-structured interview the students said that handicapped people had bad conditions at school as, in the view of P. G., “*the barrier-free entrance to school is not built and in the buildings belonging to the Faculty of Education of Comenius University are many stairs highly complicating the situation of handicapped people to get to the places they need*”. The respondents predominantly focused on physically handicapped people. During the interview respondent P. P. observed that the results probably refer to physically handicapped people as he said: “*I like that in the building in Racianska street the classrooms are marked in Braille, and there is an effort of Faculty of Education to enable various applicants to study at the university, but for the moment they do not think about all of them*”.

Another question in the questionnaire tests if there is an equal opportunity of studying at the university. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. The results of respondents' answers on equal opportunity of studying at the university.

	BC.				MGR.				TOTAL	
	1 <sup>st</sup> grade		2 <sup>nd</sup> grade		1 <sup>st</sup> grade		2 <sup>nd</sup> grade			
Variants of answers	(pc)	(%)	(pc)	(%)	(pc)	(%)	(pc)	(%)	(pc)	(%)
a) yes	13	43.33	4	12.90	5	16.67	7	22.57	29	23.77
b) more yes than no	11	36.67	21	67.74	9	30	21	67.74	62	50.82
c) more no than yes	2	6.67	1	3.23	6	20	1	3.23	10	8.2
d) no	1	3.33	1	3.23	2	6.67	1	3.23	5	4.1
e) hard to say	3	10	4	12.90	8	26.66	1	3.23	16	13.11
TOTAL	30	100	31	100	30	100	31	100	122	100

The possibility *yes* achieved the most percentage, 43.33% in the first grade of the bachelor's study, in the second grade of the bachelor's study the option *more yes than no* (67.74%) won the highest percentage. The respondents from the first grade of the master's study stated the option *more yes than no* (30%) as the most frequent answer, but also the option *hard to say* (26.66%) achieved a lot of votes. As an explanation the respondents added that they are not very satisfied because the branch they have been enrolled in was cancelled, and if they want to graduate at the same university they have to study a related branch. The students of the second grade of the master's study stated the option *more yes than no* (67.74%) as the most frequent answer.

A half of the respondents (50.82%) think that the equal opportunity of studying at the university is ensured; only 4.1% of all respondents think that the equal opportunity of studying at the university is not ensured.

In its specific meaning the democratization of education is understood as aparthenship or participation in matters connected with education. Hence it is important to

know how the students themselves become involved in university events and whether they are interested in it at all.

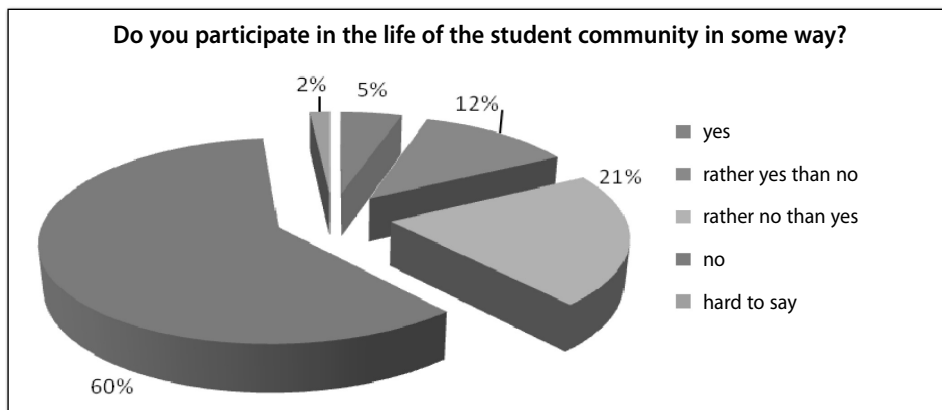


Diagram 5. The participation of students in the university life

Comparing the answers regarding the level of study, the test of fit chi-square has been used to calculate the divergence of the acquired and theoretical frequencies as in question No. 3 of the questionnaire. For results see Tables 9 and 10.

Null hypothesis has been tested by the level of significance 0.05. The degree of freedom is 4 and the critical value is 9.488.

H<sub>0</sub> – null hypothesis: The frequency of students choosing particular variants of answers is the same.

H<sub>A</sub> – alternative hypothesis: The frequency of students choosing particular variants of answers is different.

Table 9. The principle of the test of fit chi-square for the bachelor's study respondents

Bc.	Monitored frequency (P)	Expected frequency (O)	P – O	(P – O) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(P - O)^2}{O}$
	0	12.2	-12.2	148.84	12.2
	3	12.2	-9.2	84.64	6.937704918
	14	12.2	1.8	3.24	0.26557377
	43	12.2	30.8	948.64	77.75737705
	1	12.2	-11.2	125.44	10.28196721
TOTAL	61	61			107.442623

The calculated value of the test criterion chi-square is 107.442 higher than the critical value 9.488, therefore we reject the null hypothesis and we accept the alternative hypothesis.

Table 10. The principle of the test of fit chi-square for the master's study respondents

Mgr.	Monitored frequency (P)	Expected frequency (O)	P – O	(P – O) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(P - O)^2}{O}$
	6	12.2	-6.2	38.44	3.150819672
	12	12.2	-0.2	0.04	0.003278689
	12	12.2	-0.2	0.04	0.003278689
	30	12.2	17.8	316.84	25.9704918
	1	12.2	-11.2	125.44	10.28196721
TOTAL	61	61			39.40983607

The calculated value of the test criterion chi-square is 39.409 higher than the critical value 9.488, therefore we reject the null hypothesis and we accept the alternative hypothesis.

In both cases we have accepted the alternative hypothesis stating that the frequency of students choosing the particular variants of answers is different. In the master's study the results of the expected frequency (O) and the monitored frequency (P) were more different than in the bachelor's study.

The Academic Senate is the significant democratic factor in the student's life at the university. The following questions from the questionnaire will refer exactly to the senate. The first question tests the function of the Academic Senate according to the respondents. Diagram 6 shows the answers stated by all respondents from all study grades.

Notes to Diagram 6:

- a) I do not know.
- b) To solve the problems arising at the faculty. (accreditation, yearbook, curriculumetc.)
- c) To solve the students' problems and needs.
- d) To promote the students' interests.
- e) To hear the students' opinions.
- f) To introduce drafts for changes.
- g) Cooperation of pedagogues with students in favour of faculty.
- h) To communicate with the faculty management.
- i) To help students in looking for answers to questions referring to their study.
- j) To defend students' rights.
- k) To inform students on news.
- l) None.
- m) It allocates students dormitories.

Diagram 6. The functions of the Academic Senate according to all respondents from all study grades

From the total number of 122 respondents 25.41 % (31) of them wrote that they did not know what the function of the Academic Senate was. This answer won most voices. In the respondents' view the Academic Senate deals mainly with the problems

arising at the faculty. For example, they stated the problems with accreditation, the modification of the yearbook, problems in the curriculum. Furthermore, it deals with the students' problems and needs; it hears and promotes their interests. It is interesting that only 5 respondents stated the cooperation of pedagogues with students in favour of the faculty as a function of the Academic Senate. Looking for the answer to this question, most of the respondents concentrated on their own needs, mainly from the position of the student.

Students may influence who will represent the student section of the Academic Senate, namely through elections. Those who vote directly influence the composition of the Academic Senate and in this way, also their study. Therefore it is interesting to find out whether students would participate in elections as voters (at least theoretically). In Diagram 7 you may see that not even a half of the respondents (46%) would participate in the elections. Almost one third of the respondents would not participate in the elections (32%), and the remaining 22% are not able to give their opinions. If the respondents hesitate about their participation even today, it may be supposed that the chance they would participate in elections later is very small.

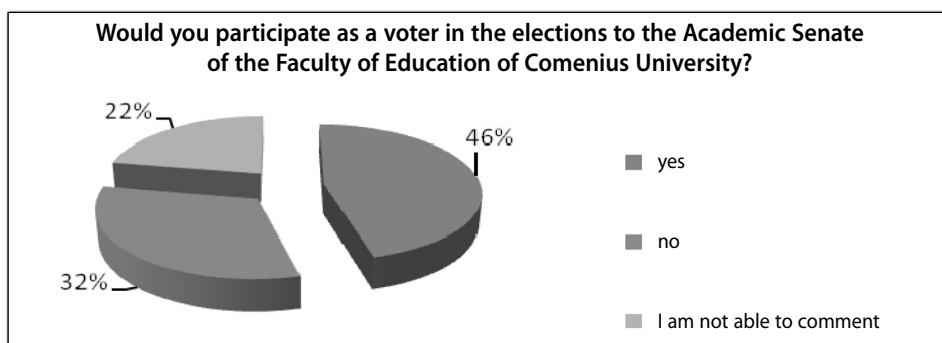


Diagram 7. The participation of respondents in the elections to the Academic Senate

Another question tests the main criterion according to which the respondents would decide to vote for a particular candidate to the Academic Senate of the Faculty of Education of Comenius University. Variants of answers are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Criteria for the selection of a candidate to the Academic Senate

Variants of answers	BC.		MGR.		TOTAL
	1st grade	2nd grade	1st grade	2nd grade	
Education and qualification of the candidate (knowledge)	7	3	-	5	15
Branch of study	5	-	-	-	5
Study grade – experience	4	1	3	2	10
Purposefulness	1	-	-	-	1

Variants of answers	BC.		MGR.		TOTAL
	1st grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	1st grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	
Openness to new changes	3	-	-	-	3
Responsibility	3	-	1	4	8
Ability to comment, promote and enforce his/her own opinions	2	5	8	9	24
Impartiality	1	1	3	2	7
Who is he/she (whether the voters know him/her personally or by report)	2	3	8	3	16
Communicativeness	5	5	1	3	14
Assertiveness, fighting spirit	1	8	7	9	25
Candidate's aims (what does he/she want to achieve, change or modify etc.)	5	6	-	7	18
Credibility	1	-	-	-	1
Openness	-	1	-	-	1
Influence	-	1	-	2	3
Tolerance	-	-	1	-	1
To help students	-	2	-	-	2
To hear and to know the students' needs	-	3	-	3	6
I do not know	-	3	1	2	6

In this table we may observe that when selecting the candidate one of the main criterion is the fighting spirit, assertiveness (20.5%) and the ability to comment, promote and enforce his/her own opinion (19.67%). The respondents are aware of the fact that the winner is one who is not afraid of showing his/her opinion and is sensibly impertinent. As an important criterion the respondents also stated a good knowledge of his/her aims (14.75%) and the fact whether they know him/her or know something about him/her (13.11%). However, this is difficult as the candidates are mostly only names on the A4 format of paper. The respondents also stated the communicativeness to be the important candidate's ability (11.48%).

The respondents answered the question whether they would check the activity of the elected candidate mostly *no* (33.61%). Justifying their answers, the respondents mostly stated that for the elected candidate rather his/her acts should speak. There is no need to be interested in a correctly elected candidate as this is just him/her who will inform on his/her activities. The results of answers are shown in Diagram 8.

Comparing the answers regarding the level of the study, the test of fit chi-square has been used to calculate the divergence of the acquired and theoretical frequency as



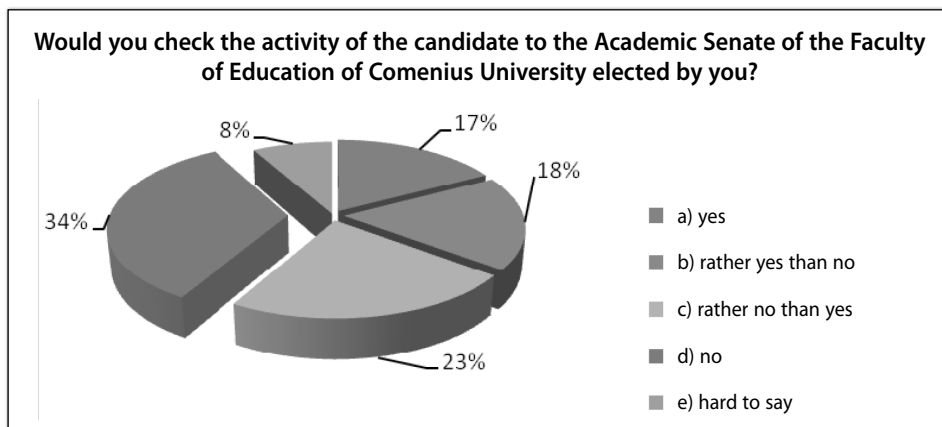


Diagram 8. Would you check the activity of the candidate to the Academic Senate elected by you?

in questions No. 3 and No. 6 of the questionnaire. The calculations and results for the bachelor's study are stated in Table 12 and for the master's study in Table 13.

Table 12. The principle of the test of fit chi-square for the bachelor's study respondents

Bc.	Monitored frequency (P)	Expected frequency (O)	P - O	(P - O) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(P - O)^2}{O}$
	12	12.2	-0.2	0.04	0.003278689
	11	12.2	-1.2	1.44	0.118032787
	15	12.2	2.8	7.84	0.642622951
	16	12.2	3.8	14.44	1.183606557
	7	12.2	-5.2	27.04	2.216393443
Total	61	61			4.163934426

Table 13. The principle of the test of fit chi-square for the master's study respondents

Mgr.	Monitored frequency (P)	Expected frequency (O)	P - O	(P - O) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(P - O)^2}{O}$
	9	12.2	-3.2	10.24	0.839344262
	11	12.2	-1.2	1.44	0.118032787
	13	12.2	0.8	0.64	0.052459016
	25	12.2	12.8	163.84	13.4295082
	3	12.2	-9.2	84.64	6.937704918
Total	61	61			21.37704918

Null hypothesis will be tested at the level of significance 0.05. The degree of freedom is 4 and the critical value is 9.488.

H<sub>0</sub> – null hypothesis: The frequency of students choosing particular variants of answers is the same.

H<sub>A</sub> – alternative hypothesis: The frequency of students choosing particular variants of answers is different.

The calculated value of the test criterion chi-square is 4.163 lower than the critical value 9.488, and therefore we accept the null hypothesis.

The calculated value of the test criterion chi-square is 21.377 higher than the critical value 9.488, therefore we reject the null hypothesis and we accept the alternative hypothesis.

In case of the bachelor's study the null hypothesis has been accepted stating that the frequency of students choosing the particular variants of answers is the same. In case of the respondents of the master's study we have accepted the alternative hypothesis, which means that the frequency of students choosing particular variants of answers is different. The frequency of particular alternatives of the bachelor's study

Table 14. Opinions of the respondents of the questions referring to their study at the university

Respondents from all grades	EVALUATION						Modus	Median
	5	4	3	2	1	Total		
Do you have an idea what the curriculum is?	63	51	8	0	0	122	5	5
Are you satisfied with the existing curriculum?	2	39	43	35	3	122	3	3
In your view, does the curriculum enable you to acquire enough knowledge and skills to act in the field of your study after your graduation?	10	45	22	35	10	122	4	3
Are you enabled to influence the existing curriculum?	3	9	22	52	36	122	2	2
Do the disciplines included in your curriculum meet the students' needs?	3	46	37	33	3	122	4	3
Do you have a real opportunity to attend lectures at other faculties?	9	16	28	34	35	122	2	2
Do you have an opportunity to attend the optional courses?	70	30	7	11	4	122	5	5
Are the university teachers willing to modify the time schedule in favour of students?	23	60	16	19	4	122	4	4

respondents is more proportional than the frequency of particular alternatives of the master's study respondents.

### Students and their "democratic" study

If the university is democratic it provides students with a certain freedom in their study. Through the following questions we find out whether the respondents have the possibility of modifying their study and influencing it.

A scale/spectrum question comprising eight questions was available for the respondents. Their task was to express their opinion using the 5-points scale (5 – yes, 4 – more yes than no, 3 – I am not decided, 2 – more no than yes, 1 – no). Table 15 shows the calculated modus and median for particular questions. The data obtained helped to a better interpretation of the acquired results.

The coefficients in Table 15 have been given to individual values of the scale in-. Coefficient 5 has been given to option "yes", coefficient 4 to option "more yes", coefficient 3 to "I am not decided", coefficient 2 to "more no than yes" and coefficient 1 to the option "no".

The opening question tests whether the respondents have an idea what the curriculum is. If they ticked mainly the answers 1 – no, 2 – more no than yes, or 3 – I am not decided, it would be not necessary to assess the following three questions. As most of

Table 15. Opinions of the respondents of the questions referring to their study at the university multiplied by certain coefficients

Respondents from all grades	EVALUATION					TOTAL	Arithmetic mean
	5	4	3	2	1		
Do you have an idea what the curriculum is?	315	204	24	0	0	543	4.45
Are you satisfied with the existing curriculum?	10	156	129	70	3	368	3.02
In your view does the curriculum enable you to acquire enough knowledge and skills to act in the field of your study after your graduation?	50	180	66	70	10	376	3.08
Are you enabled to influence the existing curriculum?	15	36	66	104	36	257	2.11
Do the disciplines included in your curriculum meet the students' needs?	15	184	111	66	3	379	3.11
Do you have a real opportunity to attend the lectures at other faculties?	45	64	84	68	35	296	2.43
Do you have an opportunity to attend optional courses?	350	120	21	22	4	517	4.24
Are the university teachers willing to modify the time schedule in favour of students?	115	240	48	38	4	445	3.65

the respondents ticked the option *yes* (mod=5), it is justified to deal with the following questions. The respondents did not mostly decide to answer the question of their satisfaction with the existing curriculum and the arithmetic mean 3.02 was approaching value 3.

Predominantly, the respondents (mod=4) feel that the curriculum rather enables than disables the students to acquire a sufficient amount of experience to act in the field of their study after their graduation.

The finding that the modus in question whether the students are enabled to influence the existing curriculum is 2 – *rather no than yes* is interesting. The arithmetic mean is 2.11, approaching the mean value 2, which is also *rather no than yes*. The respondents feel that they are rather disabled to influence the existing curriculum.

The students' curriculum includes the discipline which should fit the students' needs. The question focused right on finding whether the disciplines included in their curriculum meet their needs showed that the students are not completely decided. This question modus is 4; which means that the majority of respondents ticked the answer *rather yes* than *no*.

Besides other matters, the accreditation of the university study should enable the students to attend in reality the lectures at other faculties and also to attend optional courses. More details concerning the accreditation may be found in the theoretical section on page 22. Most frequently the respondents stated (mod=2) that they rather have not than have the opportunity to attend the lectures at other faculties. The reason is their workload caused by a great number of subjects they should attend each term. Thus the opportunity to attend lectures at other faculties exists, but is not practicable. The results regarding optional courses are more positive. The arithmetic mean of all respondents' answers is 4.24. It approaches the value 4, which is *rather yes than no*. However, the median determined the value 5 – *yes*, which does not regard the extreme values. The respondents most frequently stated that they had the opportunity to attend optional courses.

Since students have problems with the schedule of subjects and with their amount, we were interested whether university teachers are willing to modify the schedules in favour of students. The modus results having the value 4 show that most of the respondents feel that university teachers try to accommodate to wishes of their students.

It issued from the pre-research of the standardized questionnaire that the students of the study branch Pre-school and Elementary Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education of Comenius University consider the practice to be a problem. Hence, the following four questions refer to the implementation of the practice at the Faculty of Education of Comenius University in Bratislava.

Most of the respondents ticked the option *rather no than yes* (29.51%) to the question whether the respondents are satisfied with the implementation of the practice at their university. The option *hard to say* was ticked by the least (5.74%) votes.

Table 16 shows two options in each grade which have achieved the highest percentage of votes (in gray colour).

The respondents of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of the bachelor's study are the most satisfied with the practice at the university. The highest percentage of votes won the options (33.33%) and *rather yes than no* (40%). In the second grade of the bachelor's study (probably due to the acquired experience) the percentage of optimism decreases and the option *no* (32.26%) achieved the highest percentage. The option *rather yes than no* (29.03%) follows.

Table 16. The respondents' satisfaction with the implementation of the practice at the Faculty of Education of Comenius University

Variants of answers	BC.				MGR.				TOTAL	
	1 <sup>st</sup> grade		2 <sup>nd</sup> grade		1 <sup>st</sup> grade		2 <sup>nd</sup> grade			
	(pc)	(%)	(pc)	(%)	(pc)	(%)	(pc)	(%)	(pc)	(%)
a) yes	10	33.33	1	3.22	2	6.67	3	9.68	16	13.11
b) more yes than no	12	40	9	29.03	4	13.33	7	22.58	32	26.23
c) more no than yes	8	26.67	8	25.81	8	26.67	12	38.71	36	29.51
d) no	0	0	10	32.26	12	40	9	29.03	31	25.41
e) hard to say	0	0	3	9.68	4	13.33	0	0	7	5.74

The opinions regarding the satisfaction of the respondents from the master's degree of study are much more pessimistic. 40% of the respondents from the 1st grade of the master's study are not satisfied with the implementation of the practice and 26.67% are rather not satisfied than satisfied. The situation in the 2nd grade is very similar. As many as 38.71% of the respondents ticked the option *rather no than yes* and 29.03% ticked the option *no*.

Democracy provides people with a choice; hence the following question is finding out the extent to which the respondents might influence the selection of their training school during their continuous practice. Diagram 9 refers to the fact that the following answers had the highest representation of answers of all respondents – *in no way, we were always allocated* (42%) and *we might choose from the offered schools having*

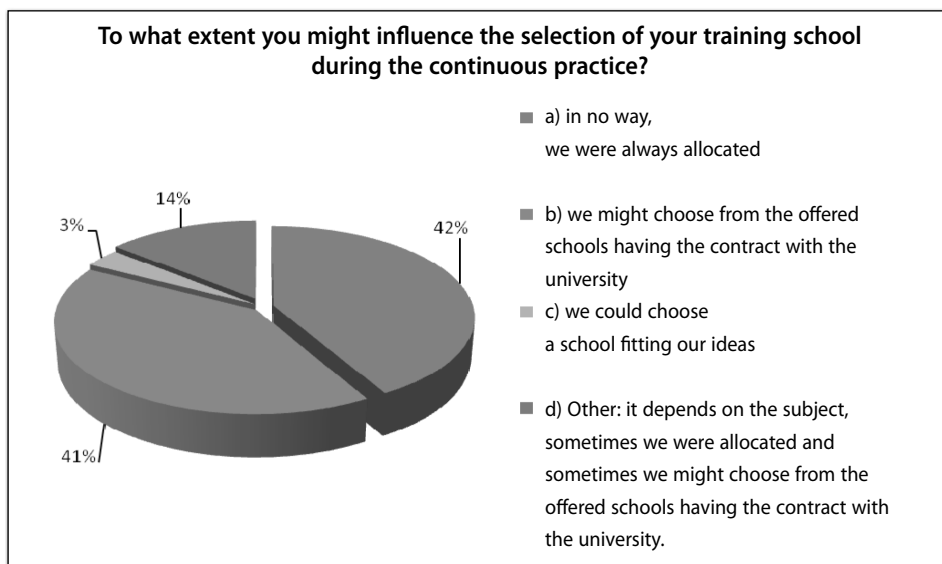


Diagram 9. The opportunity of respondents to choose the training school during the continuous practice

*the contract with the university* (41%). The results were not influenced by the disunity of opinions in particular grades. This means the results do not prove that the respondents from some grades could choose from the offered schools and some could not. The question found out the opinion disunity also among the respondents from the same grade. As the saying goes, the variety of opinions depends on the variety of people.

As the respondents are rather not satisfied with the implementation of the practice, the following two open questions discover the positive and negative features of the practice.

The respondents consider *the lack of practice* as the biggest imperfection. 27% (33) respondents stated this option independently of the opinion of others. Another drawback is the *distance* they should go to the training school (9%). This distance complicates their situation in creating their time schedule. During the complementary method – interview – one of the respondents also commented the practice in this way: "I personally would highly appreciate if I could adapt my continuous practice to my needs – I would definitely choose the school I used to attend as a pupil or secondary school student... I know the environment and the school, teachers and the school is not located an hour from my home. Also the pupils are from the housing estate I come from. I think that each student is entitled to choose the school of his/her practice." It is understandable that students are not satisfied if their training school is far away. On the other hand it needs to consider why they have been allocated right to the assigned training school.

The same percentage as the excessive distance has also been given to a *high number of students in one class* (9%). Therefore, during their changing the students will not have enough space to test the theory in practice.

8% of all respondents stated *the low readiness of training teachers for the coming students* as a negative feature. In the respondents' opinion the reason could be in the bad communication between the faculty and the training school. Training teachers rarely have time for consultations and they rarely know what the students are interested in or what they want to test in practice. Other answers mentioned include the time that is not reserved for the practice in the schedule. The respondents are not probably aware of the difficulty to harmonize the students' schedule with the already completed schedule of the training schools with the aim not to significantly influence the pupils of the given training school. The respondents are not satisfied with the amount of sittings in on classes. They would appreciate fewer sittings in on classes and a higher amount of lecturing hours.

As positive features the respondents often stated *practising the theory in practice* (35%). Practice may provide more than theory in many respects, but "the right" teacher's competence could not be achieved without theoretical knowledge. The respondents consider positive the fact that they *are enabled to see the implementation of particular occupations and activities during a day* (15%). Other mentioned positive features include: *practice and contact with children* (12.3%), *the overview of schools* (9.83%). The respondents would miss the above-mentioned overview of school establishments if university teachers regard the distance of the training schools from the respondents' (students of the Faculty of Education of Comenius) homes. The respondents regard another positive feature the fact that they *can see the reality* (7.38%) at schools. They may compare the difference in what they have learned at school with the real practice.

Democracy is created in a long-term period and it is still changing. It goes hand in hand with the society whose part it is. Society is created by people and vice-versa, peo-

ple are creating the society. Sometimes we excessively try to accommodate to more developed countries. On the one hand it is a motivating factor, but on the other hand we need to consider what kind of results we would achieve. It is not always the most rational solution as all the factors influencing the given country need to be considered. In this country the term democracy is perceived as a certain kind of "people's" ruling. However, people would be better defined as representatives presenting and promoting the interests of the public. But it is still perceived in a wider sense (equal chance for all) as a few people actively participate in this process. Similar situation occur also in the democratization of education. Also the empirical part of the project proved that the selected students perceive the democratization of education in its wider sense, this means the equal chance to be educated for all.

Democracy is about people and for people but one should be prepared for this system and also educated for it not only as a cognitive but also as a non-cognitive personality. Therefore finally we cannot answer the question whether democracy and the democratization of education is the most correct solution at the moment. As Churchill would say – Democracy is not perfect, but no one in the world has invented anything better so far.

### **Bibliografia:**

- Dahl R. A. (1998). *Demokracie a její kritici*. Praha: Victoria Publishing. ISBN 80-85605-81-3.
- Feclák P. (2004). *Bolonský proces* [on-line]. [cit. 2010-02-03]. Dostupné z <[http://www3.srk.sk/?menuclck=G-Bolonsky\\_proces](http://www3.srk.sk/?menuclck=G-Bolonsky_proces)>.
- Gavora P. (1997). *Výskumné metody v pedagogike*. Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského Bratislava. ISBN 80-223-1173-1.
- Chráška M. (2007). *Metody pedagogického výzkumu*. Praha: Grada Publishing. ISBN 978-80-247-1369-4.
- Kolláriková Z. (1997). Úloha pedagogickej komunikácie v rozvoji kritického myslenia žiakov. In Wiegerová, A. (1997). *Cesty demokracie vo výchove a vzdelávaní*, Bratislava: Iuventa. s. 4-10. ISBN 80-88893-23-2.
- Lampertová A. (2008). *Sebareflexia učiteľovho vyučovania a jeho profesijných snáh učiť*. Bratislava: Pedagogická fakulta UK. Bakalárska práca.
- Meredith K. S. (1997). Čo vlastne znamená demokracia a vzdelávanie? In Wiegerová A. (1997). *Cesty demokracie vo výchove a vzdelávaní*, Bratislava: Iuventa. s. 11-16. ISBN 80-88893-23-2
- Myersová S. (1997). *Demokracia je diskusia*. USA: Connecticut College.
- Pol M., Rabušicová M., Novotný P. a kol. (2006). *Demokracie ve škole*. Brno: Masarykova Univerzita. ISBN 80-210-4210-9.
- Pupala B. (2001). Teórie učenia a ich odraz v poňatí vyučovania. In Kolláriková Z., Pupala B. (2001). *Predškolská a elementárna pedagogika*, Praha: Portál, s. 179-217. ISBN 80-7178-585-7.
- Švec Š. (1997). *Paedagogica 14 – Humanization of education*. Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave. ISBN 80-223-1028-X.
- Zelina M., Komárik E. (1998). *Humanizácia výchovy I*. Bratislava: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Komenského. ISBN 80-88868-38-6.
- Zelina M. (2004). *Teórie výchovy alebo hľadanie dobra*. Bratislava: SPN. ISBN 80-10-00456-1.