



The Opinion of University Applicants for the Specialty Dental Technician about the Preparatory Course Organized in Medical University-Varna (Comparative Analysis)

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ABSTRACT: Dental technology is a highly technological and constantly developing profession which requires manual skills, theoretical and practical knowledge acquired during training as well as motivation for personal growth. A great number of university applicants search for and find information about their professional orientation from their family, friends, acquaintances and various online resources. The modern generation enjoy the privilege of constant mobility and access to all kinds of information, which the Internet allows nowadays. Until 2022 the schedule of the applicant preparatory course included five lectures and fifteen practical trainings. In 2022 a change in the schedule was introduced. The number of preparatory classes devoted to theoretical training were reduced and practical training classes were increased to twenty sessions. The aim of the present article is to compare the opinion of university applicants about the organization and structure of the applicant preparatory courses as well as to study their satisfaction with these courses held over the years at the Medical College of Varna. A sociological method (the questionnaire was developed by assoc. prof. Mihaela Varneva) as well as a research on literary resources on the subject were used to achieve the aim of the present study. It was estimated that the increase of practical training classes led to a higher satisfaction among respondents. During the first period (2013-2019) a very small part of the respondents (3.17%) stated that the course was sufficient for exam preparation. Almost equal is the number of respondents who stated that they could not acquire the necessary skills for the exam. The majority of the applicants (95.7%) from the second period expressed the opinion that they would consider additional exam preparation.

KEYWORDS: applicant preparatory course, dental technology, research

I. INTRODUCTION

Dental technology is a high-tech and constantly developing profession and its practice requires not only manual skills, theoretical and practical knowledge acquired during training but also motivation for personal development [6].

According to Milkov, the right choice of profession is necessary in order to turn a person into a professional. The correct choice is the one which takes into account one's own capabilities such as intellectual and mental potential, physical characteristics and willpower [1,4].

The criteria, which determine high quality medical education, depend to a large extent on the characteristics of the country providing the education: motivation to choose a profession, good pre-university education, personal intelligence, confidence for professional development [3].

The goals of higher medical education decomposed into intermediate and specific learning goals have a motivating pedagogical impact in planning and organizing the learning process. The manner in which the educational process is conducted in medical universities is essential for increasing the motivation to adopt an active and conscious role [2,5]. The quality selection during entrance exams is a prerequisite for the optimal flow of the learning process and better assimilation of the necessary practical skills as well as for the acquisition of competencies which allow good competitiveness on the labor market.

A great number of university applicants search for and find information about their professional orientation from their family, friends, acquaintances and various online resources. The modern generation enjoy the privilege of constant mobility and access to all kinds of information, which the Internet allows nowadays [3]. The information about the organized upcoming preparatory courses for applicants is published



annually on the website of Medical College of Varna [7].

Training in dental technology is conducted only in three of the medical colleges in Bulgaria (medical colleges in the city of Varna, Sofia and Plovdiv). The exam is identical for all of the three colleges and includes clay tooth modeling [6].

The idea of preliminary preparatory courses for students willing to become dental technicians was first implemented in Varna in 2013 with a course called "Introduction to Modeling" and a few years later such a course was also introduced at the medical colleges of Plovdiv and Sofia [4].

The highlighting of good practices, the improvement and optimization of the annual courses for university applicants in the "Dental Technician" specialty in the medical colleges will contribute to meet the expectations of the students, to favour the obtaining of informed consent from the candidates, to increase personal motivation and the quality of training of future students in the specialty [4].

II. AIM

The aim of the present article is to compare the opinion of university applicants about the organization and structure of the applicant preparatory courses as well as to study their satisfaction with these courses held over the years at the Medical College of Varna.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A sociological method (the questionnaire was developed by assoc. prof. Mihaela Varneva) as well as a research on literary resources on the subject were used to achieve the aim of the present study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the period 2013 – 2019 a study was conducted by Associate Professor Mihaela Varneva. It included prospective students (63 respondents) who participated in the modeling course and aimed at exploring their opinion about the organization and the implementation of the course. In 2022, Associate Professor Svetlana Peneva was asked to distribute the survey cards among students and to submit them to the researchers who processed them. During the second period 23 prospective students participated in the study.

Until 2020 the course was held with a schedule of 5 lecture hours and 15 hours of practical exercises. In 2021 a change in the schedule was introduced. The hours devoted to theoretical training were canceled and the number of hours for practical training was increased to 20.

The majority of respondents in both periods indicated the university's website as a source of information about the course (73.02% in 2013-2019 and 78.30% in 2022). During all the eleven years since the course has been held, an announcement for the upcoming courses has been published on the website of the University of Medicine – Varna.

In the surveys conducted for the period 2013-2019 prevail positive answers which point out define the need of such a preparatory course and its schedule (93.65%). In 2022 there was an increase in the number of respondents who approved of the organization of the course, which included the creation of four teeth – two single-rooted, one double-rooted and one three-rooted teeth (95.60%).

The clay tooth modelling exam requires manual skills. A great number of the respondents rated the skills they acquired during the course as useful for the exam (Figure 1).

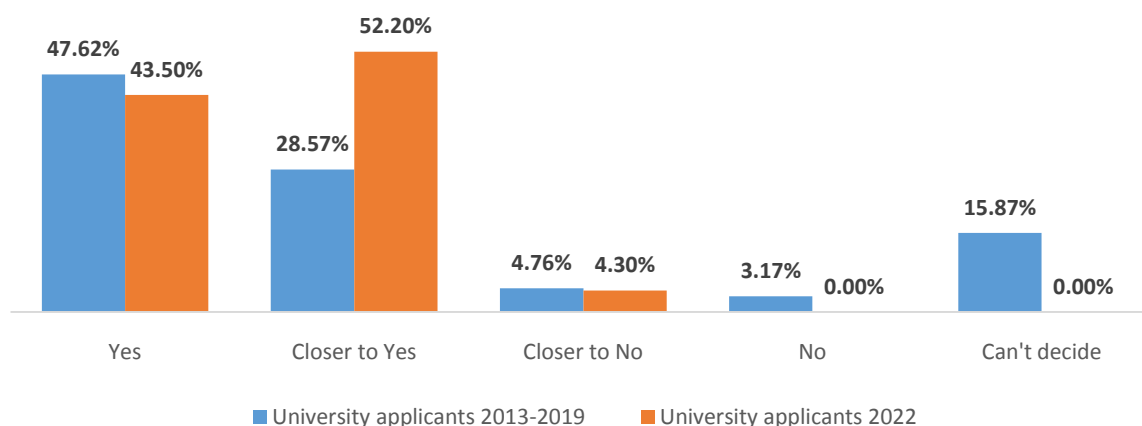




Figure 1. Acquired useful exam skills

A large number of the respondents share that they were able to acquire the necessary skills which will help them perform well during the exam (2013-2019 – 76.19% and 2022 – 95.70%). In general the change in the organization of the course was evaluated positively by the majority of the students. Almost the same number of respondents stated that they could not acquire useful exam skills and in the second period there were no negative answers.

People acquire knowledge and practical skills at different pace and not everyone has the necessary manual skills for the profession of a

dental technician. There was a very small number of respondents (2013-2019) who did not manage to acquire sufficient skills during the course (7.93%) and the number of those who gave a negative answer in 2022 was significantly smaller (4.30%). Perhaps the increase in practical hours and the number of modeled teeth contributed to this.

The lecturers who participate in the training are one of the most significant factors for the quality of training. The evaluation of the applicant students is also important for the quality of the course (Figure 2).

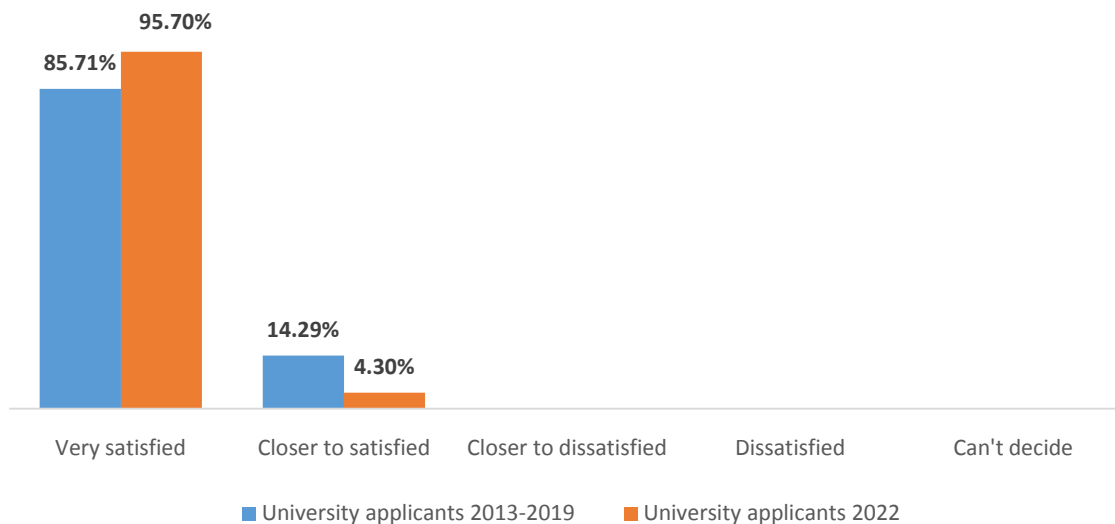


Figure 2. Satisfaction with the lecturers who taught the course

The data have shown a positive assessment of the lecturers who participated in the training of the university applicants over the years. The majority of them have many years of pedagogical and professional experience, which contributes to the quality of the course and good preparation for the exam. The majority of students who completed the course in 2022 reported greater satisfaction compared to the students from the period 2013-2019.

The course aims to help participants determine whether this is their future profession and whether they have the necessary skills and dexterity for it (Figure 3).

It was interesting to find out that during the period between 2013 and 2019 the respondents

characterized the course as sufficient despite the small number of practical activities. The majority of respondents from that period (77.78%) and nearly all of the respondents from 2022 (95.70%) stated that they would look for additional training. The proportion of those who cannot afford additional training during the first period is 6.35%. It was found out that during both periods described in the study there were respondents who hesitated because they most likely encountered many difficulties during the practical exercises and were not convinced that they possessed the necessary skills and dexterity. The group from the second period is smaller compared to the first (2013-2019 – 12.70% and 2022 – 4.30%).

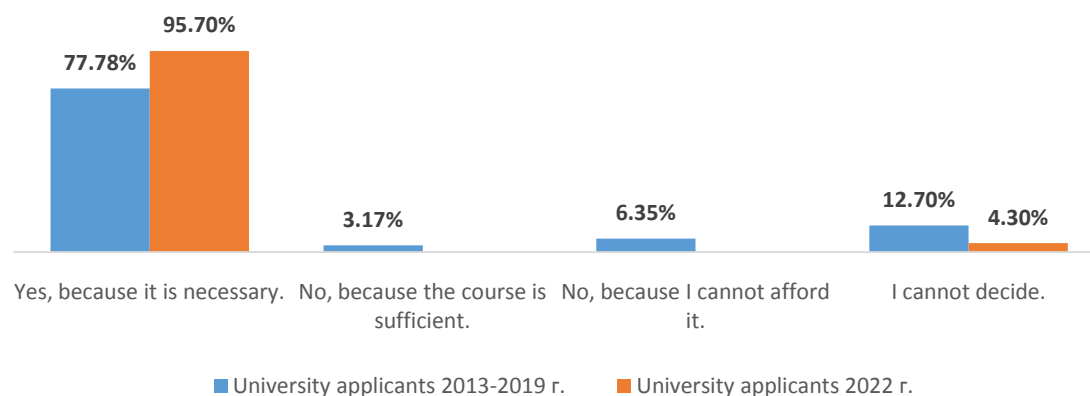


Figure 3. Need of additional training

Due to the increase in the number of satisfied respondents from the second period, the college management have made a change and in 2023 the course is planned to last 40 academic hours for the period of six days. The schedule includes the allexam teeth to be made – 4 premolars and 4 molars. The researchers are planning to conduct a new study to examine the opinions of prospective students and to find out whether the change will satisfy them.

V. CONCLUSION

The conducted scientific research and the established results and their analysis led to the following conclusions to be drawn:

1. The increased number of classes devoted to practical work lead to higher satisfaction among the respondents from the second period;
2. In the first period (2013-2019) there is a very small part of respondents who state that the course is sufficient for the exam preparation (3.17%), while in the second period there are no such opinions;
3. The number of respondents from the two periods, who state that they could not acquire skills useful for the exam, is almost equal.
4. Almost all applicant students from the second period state that they will look for additional preparation for the exam (95.70%)

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