

Mini-Survey Results: Integration of ECTS into Yerevan State University (YSU), Armenia

Brief Description: There were selected MA students from two departments of Yerevan State University, aiming to compare the survey results conducted among the experimental group members (i.e. those who are the first carriers of Bologna reforms, more specifically, of European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)) and control group participants (i.e. MA students of traditional educational system).

The Main Goals:

1. To reveal the awareness of the students on ECTS.
2. To compare the levels of awareness on ECTS between experimental and control groups.
3. To reveal the level of understanding and the main aims of ECTS by students
4. To find out how the students perceive their readiness for entering the labor market.

Sample: 1st (*experimental*) and 2nd (*control*) year MA Students from the departments of Psychology and Sociology (total number of surveyed students: **54**).

Sample Justification:

1st year master students are the only ones in YSU which study according to ECTS. The latter will also be implemented next year for BA students and consequently for 2nd year master students. Thus for making comparative survey, we could only involve 1st year master students as experimental group participants.

On the other hand, the choice of MA students is determined with their 4-year student experience in traditional higher education during BA studies, which makes the contrast between traditional and reformed systems more apparent and informative regardless the type of the group.

In addition to this, some of the questions reflected in the questionnaire require students (young specialists) with more experience of study in HEIs. To make the data comparable in between the groups, the groups were selected from the same departments. The chosen specialties are among the disciplines in humanities which become more and more demanded by the new applicants for HE.

Results of the Survey

1. Awareness about the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System (which is being implemented now in YSU))

74.1% of the respondents are aware about ECTS out of which 52.5% (which is 38.9% of the whole sample) is directly engaged in the system (according to the responses).

**REMINDER: All 1st Year Master Students are engaged in ECTS (EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS).
2nd Year Master Students study according to the traditional evaluation system (CONTROL GROUPS).**

Interesting notes: 11.5% of the Experimental group (1st year master) students are not aware about ECTS system, despite the fact that they study according to ECTS.

I am afraid, but I think that this picture might be quite typical for a lot of students also outside YSU. According to the existing picture, one can definitely mention that those who do not know about the system, do not also understand the advantages of that system (mobility, integration in to European Higher Education Area, etc...). These students are only aware of the change of evaluation systems, the essence is missed.

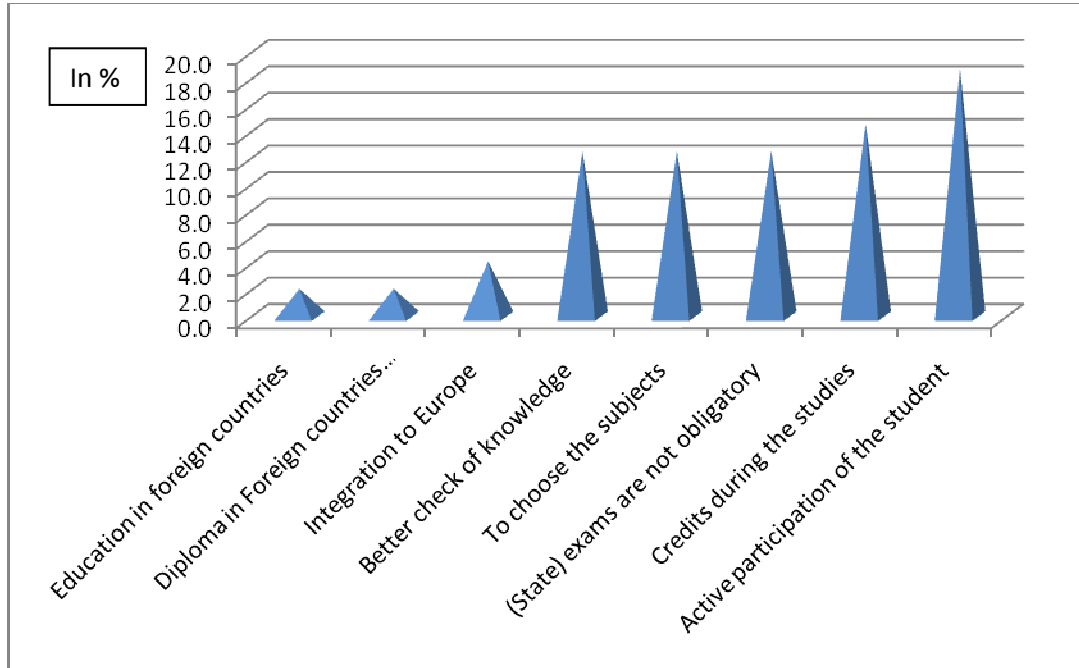
As expected quite a big number of control group students are not aware about ECTS (39.3% of II year master students).

2. Benefits from ECTS for 38.9% of students who are directly engaged in the system

81% - No Benefits (this number might also be justified with the fact that ECTS has been implemented for less than a year in YSU).

3. We have also asked the students (those who are aware about ECTS and are both from control and experimental groups) to indicate some of the **advantages and disadvantages of ECTS**. Here is the picture:

Chart 1. ECTS Advantages

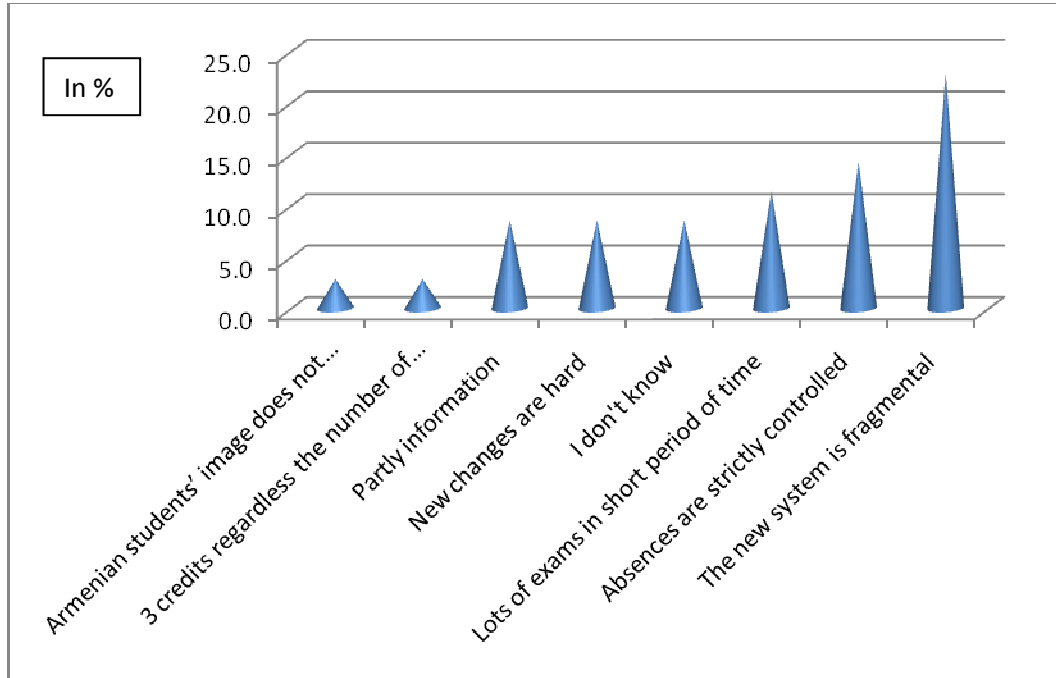


Q4 (Advantages)	74.1%
Education in foreign countries	2.1%
Diploma in Foreign countries accepted	2.1%
Integration to Europe	4.2%
Better check of knowledge	12.5%
To choose the subjects	12.5%
State exam not obligatory	12.5%
Credits during the studies	14.6%
Active participation of the student	18.8%

As we can see from the chart 1, two of the key concepts of ECTS received only about 2% of the answers. These are “the possibility of studying abroad/mobility” and “Diploma recognition in Foreign countries” (though the latter is not a direct result of ECTS).

It is also worthy to mention that students highly appreciate the possibility of being evaluated/obtaining of credits during the semester (and as a consequence we have the active participation of students and non-obligatory exams), existence of selective courses.

Chart 2. ECTS Disadvantages



Q5	74.1%
Armenian students' image does not correspond to ECTS	2.9%
3 credits regardless the number of exams	2.9%
Partly information	8.6%
New changes are hard	8.6%
I don't know	8.6%
Lots of exams in short period of time	11.4%
Absences are strictly controlled	14.3%
The new system is fragmental	22.9%

As we can see from the chart 2, the respondents mostly blame the current partial/fragmental situation of the system than ECTS itself. This point received the highest score: 22.9% (also refer to chart 3).

One of the main disadvantages of the system, as indicated by the students, is the control over the absences of students from the lessons, which mostly discourages students to become hired for a job, to be integrated with the labor market, gain some work experience, etc.

The point can definitely be viewed from two sides: from students viewpoint, it is treated as a disadvantage, from the viewpoint of the efficiency of the education, the matter can be treated as an advantage. The conclusion that we could have here, is that the system most probably contains an error, which causes this paradox. The error became more or less apparent when 24.1% of the respondents expressed their comments on the topic out of which 7.4% (the highest percent in this scale) agrees that their higher education misses practice. Probably, that's the reason of complaints expressed by the students regarding the strict control over the absences and a good reflection of remoteness of the Armenian HEIs and the labor market.

In this context, it is also worthy to note that 55.6% of the respondents think that their skills learnt during university years only partially match with the Armenian labor market. Accordingly, 24.1% answered positively, 18.% negatively. 1.9% found difficulty in answering this question.

Chart 3. Evaluation of ECTS integration process in the respective departments.

