PROJECT METHOD AS A TEACHING TECHNOLOGY IN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES.

In spite of the fact that project method was introduced at the beginning of the 20th century, it never lost its topicality due to unlimited possibilities to practice it during the lessons of English (as well as any other subject) of all age groups. In our work we concentrate on the project, conventionally called ‘Seminar’, which is currently being developed with one of the groups in technical university, its advantages, disadvantages, and pitfalls.

Let us first define the main term of our topic. Project method is one of the pedagogical technologies that reflects learner-centred approach in teaching. Before starting a project we defined the aims and the main idea of our future work as the following. As English is a complementary subject in our department, we need to motivate students to study it. Forcing young people to learn by not putting them credit or not admitting to examination is not effective from the point of view of the very idea of learning itself: nothing is remembered if not studied regularly. That is why project method can push the young people to getting interested in the subject.

Our project was defined to be aimed at introducing the educational process, scientific and student life in the department of physics and technology to the students of the first and second year students in order for them to define their future speciality and get some practical knowledge. As the seminar was going to be held in English with the participation of the teachers and postgraduate students of the department, the young generation would understand the importance of learning a foreign language.

Speaking about the advantages of the project, it is worth speaking about the following. In the previous paragraph we mentioned some positive points. Besides that one of the most important advantages is unification. That means that, first, the project unites people of different characters and temperaments in one activity where everyone can find job suitable for him/her. The second point of unification is that this project contains features of investigation (individual or group search, analysis of the
information), science (collecting and processing information by specialty), creativity (creation of idea, making a scenario, presentation), publishing (making posters, handouts, etc.).

Speaking about the stages of development of the project, it included planning, preparation, presentation. The first stage involved giving the students the idea of the project, definition of the aims, division of the roles. The group was divided into small subgroups which included from two to four persons. The whole group adopted preliminary scenario, after that the hosts were defined. Their task was to write their speeches after the rest of the tasks had been made. The sections of the seminar included general information about the specialisations, advice of the teachers and postgraduate students, information about the conferences for students, cultural leisure, quiz. According to the sections five subgroups were formed. The teacher’s role was one of a supervisor, advisor, and spell-checker.

Speaking about disadvantages and possible pitfalls, it is important to say that organising a group of individualists (not individuals) can create a lot of small problems. The major problems of our project were that wishing to motivate first-second year students with the help of fourth-fifth year students turned out to be a failure in the majority of the groups that were proposed to make a project as senior students typically work besides of studying and don’t have enough time for additional tasks, as it is almost impossible to take project method as the main technology of teaching, it requires extra time. The students who eagerly took the idea of the project paid not enough attention to the main programme that they needed to study besides making a project. In some cases students overestimated themselves. And one more thing worth mentioning is that, having fixed dates for giving the results of project work, we had to shift them because not all of the students succeeded in doing everything on time. But these are small drawbacks. If you work in technical educational establishment and find a group that is eager to make something special besides the programme, making a project will be a great pleasure, a wonderful possibility to learn more about the characters of people and ways to co-operate together, and a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of your job.
References.

