

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN MAINTAINING THE BALANCE BETWEEN ACCESSIBILITY AND SECURITY IN THE FINAL THESES OF STUDENTS FROM THE INFORMATION SERVICES STUDY FIELD

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Abstract

Today's information services are essentially related to access to content, various data, statistics, especially relevant for the development and implementation of various strategies and/or tactics, which are often very important for the future development of any organization. Nowadays, they are also user-centric (individual or organizations), which means knowing the user's needs, expectations, features, characteristics, etc. Increasingly, we are not just talking, but implementing an evidence-based approach that sometimes requires highly sensitive or reliable data. In all these situations, we should maintain a balance between accessibility and security, as well as in the study process. This is especially evident in the final theses of students studying Information Services. Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences, as well as all universities of applied sciences and the applied research conducted in them, are intended to solve real problems of real organizations, when it is not so easy to ensure access to complete and comprehensive information and to make optimal decisions based on it, but at the same time to maintain confidentiality and protection of data sensitive to the organization or individual. The report will present the experience of the Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences and the challenges that arise when preparing students' theses in this field of study.

Key words: Accessibility of Information, Security of Information, Information Services, Higher Education

1 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge, information and their management are vitally important for all firms and organizations in the contemporary world. The ability to create, acquire, integrate, deploy distributed knowledge and information is fundamental organizational capability. For successful functioning firms and organizations must not only exploit already existing knowledge and information, but must also invest into permanent exploring and creating new knowledge, new information as strategic options for future development and competitive advantage. (Woudstra, Van den Hooff, Schouten, 2015). And not only exploit or share them by the aims to be informed, but also base their own decisions – in all areas, aspects and levels – on the suitable amount of information.

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2 METHODOLOGY

The most important approach in the research was **evidence-based** approach. The approach was taken because within science disciplines, academic research is generally based on an empirical approach to enhancing knowledge. This methodology for scholarly investigations is factual and verifiable through analysis of observations or experiences instead of theory or logic. (Educational Research and Evidence-based Practice, 2007, Evidence-based Methodology, 2020, and ect.)

As the research methods were chosen case study and **content** analysis where the most relevant characteristics of them are the following

- a case study is a detailed study of a specific subject, such as a person, group, place, event, organization, or phenomenon. Case studies are commonly used in social, educational, clinical, and business research (Zuker, 2009, Bitinas, 2006, Bitinas and etc., 2008, Luobikiene, 2003, and etc.).
- a content analysis is a highly flexible research method that has been widely used in library and information science (LIS) studies with varying research goals and objectives. The research method is **applied** in qualitative, quantitative, and sometimes mixed modes of research frameworks and employs a wide range of analytical **techniques** to generate findings and put them into context. (Library Trends: Research Methods, 2006, Bitinas, 2006, Bitinas and etc., 2008a, 2008b, Luobikiene, 2003, and etc.)

3 RESULTS

Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences, as well as all universities of applied sciences and the applied research conducted in them, are intended to solve real problems of real organizations, when it is not so easy to ensure access to complete and comprehensive information and to make optimal decisions based on it, but at the same time to maintain confidentiality and protection of data sensitive to the organization or individual.

Final thesis is a student's independent research or project format qualificative paper of the assessment of learning outcomes, analysing a relevant topic following the requirements of the study programme (The procedure of the final thesis preparation, defence and assessment description of the study field group programmes of business and public administration and social sciences, 2019).

Analysis of the Regulation for the Writing and Defending of Final Thesis (2019) as well as Methodological Guidelines for Final Thesis Writing (2020) showed that in both documents there is very obvious and straight focus on the concrete institution which problems, issues or challenges students are going to analyse in their final thesis.

For example, in Methodological Guidelines for Final Thesis Writing (2020) is written, that “one of the most important stages in final thesis writing is the choice of the topic. It is very important to select the topic according to its relevance, own interests and abilities. It is hard to expect a correct topic formulation without a problem question specification. The choice and formulation of the topic predetermine successful further writing and the value of the final thesis.” (p. 6)

In both documents is written that “choosing the topic of the final thesis it is important to take into consideration its relevance, theoretical and practical significance, research possibilities i.e. if appropriate methods are available, if material conditions allow solving the objectives of the research, if appropriate literature is available for the topic development.” It is appropriate to provide a good formulation of the selected topic, having set strict boundaries of the research (Martinkienė, Šliažienė, 2017). The priority is usually provided to the topics that have practical application.

The topic of the thesis has to reveal a certain problem in a new and unique aspect, i.e. the topics of synoptic or descriptive character, not allowing practical problem introduction, their analysis and solutions, are inappropriate.

The title of the final thesis should reflect the title of organization, the object (what the student researches, e.g. loyalty, motivation, teamwork etc.), the research path / action (e.g. estimation, analysis, identification and (as needed) the possibilities of improvement etc. (Methodological Guidelines for Final Thesis Writing, 2020)

The examples of correctly formulated topics	1. „X“ Company Image Evaluation from the Customers’ Perspective 2. The Analysis of „X“ Company Production Division Working Time Efficiency 3. Customer Service Quality Evaluation from „X“ Company Customer Point of View 4. „X“ Company Logistics Performance Analysis and Directions for Improvement 5. Evaluation of „X“ Company Motivation Measures from the Employees’ Perspective
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The interests of the selected organization should be taken into consideration primarily when formulating the title, since it will be easier to receive the required information. Favourable environment is established, when the selected topic of the final thesis meets the interests of the organization and the author.

The problematic question that is compulsory in an applied research also should be tightly related with the concrete company or organization. As well as the conclusions and on their basis formulated recommendations should be discussed with the leaders of the company or organization and suitable to implement into the practise.

All of these requirements require students to obtain official and written consent from the company or organization to use their company or organization's name and all data collected for the research in their final thesis. And if earlier years ago it was more or less formal action, it means that companies and organizations signed those confirmation letters easily, now approximately 5 years ago, more and more of them - especially private companies from finances, production - wouldn't like to let use the company's names. This number is increasing approximately 1-2 proc. a year. It shows that maintaining the balance between accessibility and security become more relevant and creates more challenges for the students **ant** to the university and to give more concern to keep the quality of the final thesis as well as the research itself.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Today's information services are essentially related to access to content, various data, statistics, especially relevant for the development and implementation of various strategies and/or tactics, which are often very important for the future development of any organization.

Nowadays, they are also user-centric (individual or organizations), which means knowing the user's needs, expectations, features, characteristics, etc. Increasingly, we are not just talking, but implementing an evidence-based approach that sometimes requires highly sensitive or reliable data. In all these situations, we should maintain a balance between accessibility and security, as well as in the study process.

This is especially evident in the final theses of students studying Information Services. Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences, as well as all universities of applied sciences and the applied research conducted in them, are intended to solve real problems of real organizations, when it is not so easy to ensure access to complete and comprehensive information and to make optimal decisions based on it, but at the same time to maintain confidentiality and protection of data sensitive to the organization or individual.

The extra activities and requirements are needed to keep the standards of high quality in final thesis of the students, especially from the study field of Information Services.

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