

# STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TO CULTURE AND RELIGION DIVERSITY AND CHANGING CONDITIONS ON LABOUR MARKET AND IN EDUCATION SYSTEM

[Postoje studentů ke kulturní a náboženské diverzitě a k měnícím se podmínkám  
na trhu práce a ve vzdělávacím systému]

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**Abstract:** The presented paper deals with the questionnaire survey conducted by means of the Semantic Differential method in the groups of students studying at School of Business Administration in Karviná, Silesian University in Opava. The research focuses on students' attitudes towards some controversial aspects of the globalized society characterized by migration and plurality trends. The evaluation of the respondents' opinions is especially related to the areas of religion and culture diversity as well as the education system and its ability to adequately react to the current changes.

**Keywords:** attitudes, culture, diversity, globalization, religion, security.

**JEL classification:** J24

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## Introduction

Globalization is related not only to economy, but to numerous areas of social and cultural life. New post-modern movements criticize some aspects of globalization sectors as women, ethnic minorities, and people who are subject to authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. In the post-modern era we can observe two different attitudes related to diversity. The first one is founded on a strong valorisation of diversity, which is a crucial value in various dimensions related to identity, model of convergence, relationship with the adversary, and models of alternative societies. Diversity is a temporary phenomenon and is expected to give way to conformity and group unity in the time perspective. The other opinion does not present any intention to make things homogeneous and proclaims that it is necessary to preserve the differences as they present the strength. (Pleyers, 2011)

As D. Larsen-Friedman states, in the period of post-modern globalization, the language and culture teaching field has moved from unity to diversity as language and culture learners do not present a homogeneous group as it was in the past. This situation can be explained by the following facts:

1 There are more second language users of English than there are native speakers.

2 The English language has adopted the status of an international language and this is closely related to the mobility of population around the world in search of jobs or better living conditions.

3 Parents' aspirations make children begin studying English as soon as possible.

4 An increasing number of international students want to acquire higher education in English-speaking and other foreign countries.

Obviously, language learners also differ in a number of dimensions as motivation, language aptitude, gender, age, being monolingual or bilingual, etc. (Larsen, Friedman, 2011).

The concept of teacher has changed as well as teachers seem to be multidimensional beings at present. They are learners, have to have the knowledge of various methods and show flexibility and creativity in using and developing them. Moreover, with the innovations in technology and the development of the Internet, there is more diversity in the places where teaching is realized, leading to virtual meetings of learners to discuss issues. Diversity helps to adapt to a rapidly changing world and speakers, learners and teachers actively transform their linguistic world.

The authors of the paper as teachers educating future business people at School of Business Administration in Karviná, Silesian University in Opava, suppose that diversity is extremely important in achieving business objectives. Our students must have ability to deal with diverse consumers and customers in order to develop products and services of superior quality and values as diversity provides a broader, richer, more fertile environment for creative thinking and innovation. (Gibson, 2002). In our opinion, diversity can be seen as an asset because it enables to develop talents from various culture bases.

The presented paper deals with the questionnaire survey conducted by means of the Semantic Differential method in the groups of students studying at the faculty mentioned above. The research focuses on students' attitudes towards some controversial aspects of the globalized society characterized by migration and plurality trends. The evaluation of the respondents' opinions is especially related to the areas of religion and culture diversity as well as the education system and its ability to adequately react to the current changes.

The research was divided into three blocks – the first one was related to cultural and the second one to educational issues. The first block involved for example questions connected with the fact whether the culture and religion diversity is perceived as enrichment or danger, with the phenomena of sympathy and tolerance to various ethnic groups, the concept of multicultural society, feeling of safety in the monocultural society, problems in multicultural societies caused by religion radicalism or social position of ethnic minorities, etc.

The second part of the research reflects students' attitudes to the changing European reality and its interconnection with education. The areas researched involve the topics related to students' awareness of the impact that current political, social and cultural processes may have on their future professional lives, to their preparation for the changing conditions on labour market as well as political and social changes in Europe.

The final block of the research concentrated on associations that students were asked to generate in connection with the concepts of migration, religion, and tolerance.

## **1 Methods**

In the first stage, the described research was based on the study of foreign and home publications, the analysis of data and documents, especially the ones issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Physical Education of the Czech Republic, and the analysis and

evaluation of the data gathered in our primary questionnaire research using the method of the Semantic Differential.

The Semantic Differential measures people's reactions to stimulus words and concepts in terms of ratings on bipolar scales defined with contrasting adjectives or nouns at each end. The method belongs to psycho-semantic ones investigating individuals' attitudes in the system of positive and negative evaluation. Each attitude involves cognitive, emotional and conative aspects. The method is based on locating a concept on a scale in the multidimensional semantic space. The poles of the scales are represented by pairs of words with the opposite meaning. The Semantic Differential enables to measure connotative meanings of the concepts and to facilitate an insight into the individual's inner world. Acquired data can be processed using qualitative and quantitative approaches and classified in several ways – an analysis within an item, an analysis based on evaluation of global similarity, and an analysis related to specific dimensions.

The mentioned bipolar adjective scales are a simple, economical means for obtaining data on people's reactions. It is possible to use them both with adults, children coming from any culture. The most important general contribution of the Semantic Differential is the provision of a single attitude space for all stimuli. This permits analyses, comparisons, and insights that were impossible with traditional instruments. As Vašátková and Chvál (2010) state, the method of the Semantic Differential is applicable is the measurement of pupils' attitudes towards particular concepts of educational reality (Brožová, 2011). The comparison of the data obtained in the form of anonymous feedback is an available and valuable source of information for researchers.

We also took into consideration output of pedagogical studies dealing with students' attitudes to various topics. They become the goal of surveys especially in the field of sociological research (Musil, 2008). As there are not numerous surveys focusing on students' attitudes towards post-modernism, the question of attitudes towards global problems and their link to pedagogy have also been included in our research as the acquired results may be significant for the shift of knowledge and predict further steps in pedagogical research.

The concept of attitude has been derived from social psychology and means preparedness for a reaction related to three dimensions:

1. Believes, ideology and verbalized theories of attitude carriers.
2. Expression of emotions.
3. Approach that certain acts must be realized.

The mentioned dimensions present the basis of so called three – stage model that can be applied when conducting research related to attitudes. It involves cognitive, affective and conative components.

As mentioned before, the goal of the research was to carry out an analysis of the acquired data, evaluate their positive or negative connotations, and search determinants related to these phenomena. We are submitting the following hypotheses:

- H1: Religion and culture diversity is perceived by students rather in a positive way.
- H2: Students' preference is sympathy and tolerance to ethnic minorities.
- H3: Students incline to the concept of multicultural society.
- H4: Current political, social and cultural processes do not have any impact on students' future careers.

- H5: Students' opinions related to the changing of social, cultural conditions in Europe are positive.
- H6: Students' opinions about the readiness of educational system to react to the changing conditions on labour market are negative.

The above listed hypotheses were verified at the beginning of the summer semester 2014-15 using the data acquired in the questionnaires distributed to 163 students of School of Business Administration in Karviná, Silesian University in Opava, out of the basic set of 170 students of Tourism.

## 2 Results and evaluation

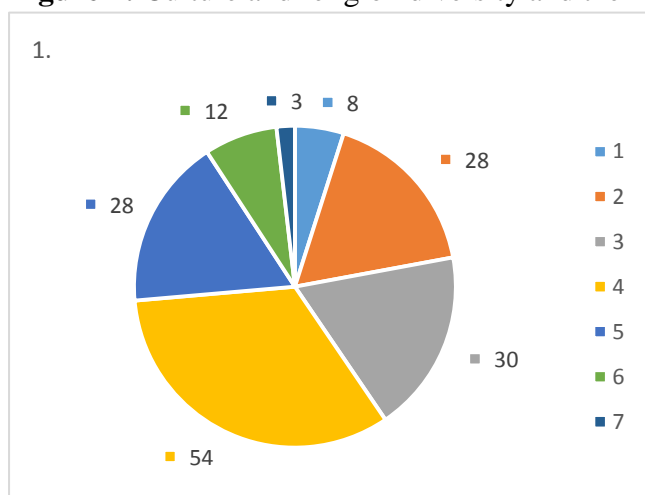
**Table 1:** Culture and religion diversity and their impact

Culture and religion diversity is connected with

enrichment of various aspects of life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	danger threatening in various aspects of life
	8	28	30	54	28	12	3	

Source: own processing

**Figure 1:** Culture and religion diversity and their impact



Source: own processing

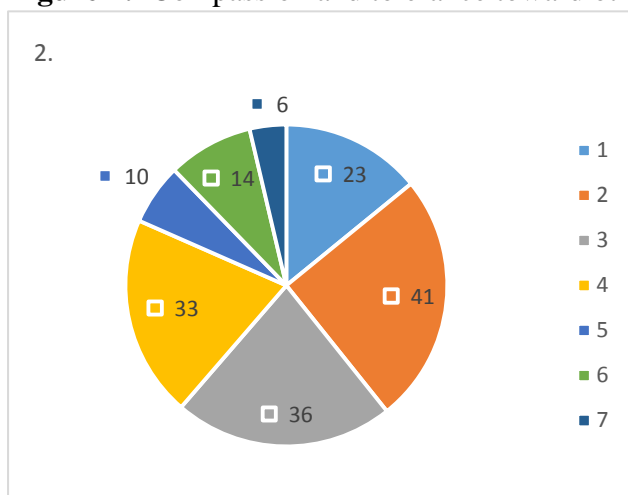
In the answers to the question about students' attitudes to culture and religion diversity, the majority of students answers are placed in the middle of the scale within the scale positions 3-5, which shows that they are not able to determine their position, but more students are inclined to see aspects enriching their life in the scale position 2. At the same time scale positions 6 and 7 indicate that danger connected with diversity is for them of less importance with the number of respondents of 12 and 3 in the scale positions 6 and 7.

**Table 2:** Compassion and tolerance toward other ethnic groups

Do you prefer

compassion and tolerance toward other ethnic groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Compassion and tolerance are not important
	23	41	36	33	10	14	6	

Source: own processing

**Figure 2:** Compassion and tolerance toward other ethnic groups

Source: own processing

In the answer related to compassion and tolerance students distinctly chose the left side of the offered spectrum stating that compassion and tolerance are very important for them – the number of 36 respondents in scale position 3 and the number of 41 in the scale position 2 of the scale. Only 6 students think that compassion and tolerance are not important at all in the scale position 7 and 14 students expressed similar opinions in in the scale position 6.

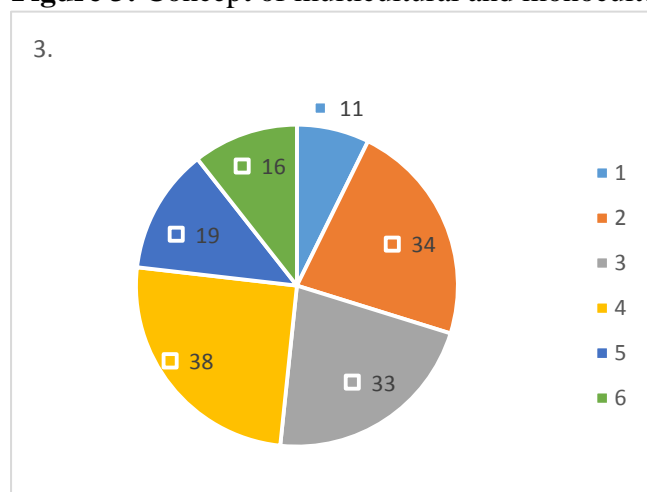
**Table 3:** Concept of multicultural and monocultural society

Do you tend to agree with the concept of

multicultural society?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Monocultural society is the guaranty of security.
	11	34	33	38	19	16	11	

Source: own processing

**Figure 3:** Concept of multicultural and monocultural society



Source: own processing

The biggest number of students chose the scale position 4 in the offered spectrum, which probably means that it is difficult for them to state their opinions in this topic. Nevertheless, the majority of students agree with the concept of multicultural society, which is expressed in the left side of the spectrum with numbers 33 in the scale position 3 and 34 in the scale position 2. The right side of the spectrum is represented by 19 answers in the scale position 5 and 16 respondents in the scale position 6.

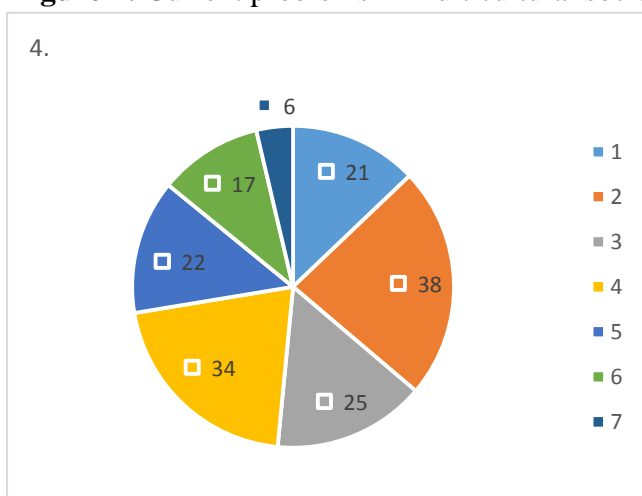
**Table 4:** Current problems in multicultural societies and their reasons

Current problems in multicultural societies are caused by

religious radicalism of ethnic minorities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Problems in multicultural societies originate in social status of ethnic minorities.
	21	38	25	34	22	17	6	

Source: own processing

**Figure 4:** Current problems in multicultural societies and their reasons



Source: own processing

In answers to question four students clearly stated that religious radicalism of ethnic minorities is responsible for current problems in multicultural societies. The left side of the spectrum is distinctly dominating with the numbers 25 in the scale position 3, 38 in the scale position 2, and even with 21 in the scale position 1 who strongly support the mentioned idea. The right part of the scale shows numbers 22 in the scale position 5, 17 in the scale position 6, and only 6 in the scale position 7.

The next part of the review was aimed at students' opinions related to the current system of education in connection with the changing social and cultural conditions. It has been proved that students' opinions are diversified showing prevailing placement of answers in the middle of the semantic differential scale, which can be interpreted in two ways: the students were not sure about their answers or they are partly satisfied with the education system, but they can see its drawbacks. If we compare the number of answers in the left and right parts of the scale, we can state that negative evaluation was dominating. Distinctly positive opinions related to the education system were expressed only by 3 respondents, 16 students chose the scale position 2 and 29 students the scale position 3. In the right part, 29 respondents chose the scale position 5, 27 students the scale position 6, and only 13 students are definitely not satisfied with the education system in the scale position 7.

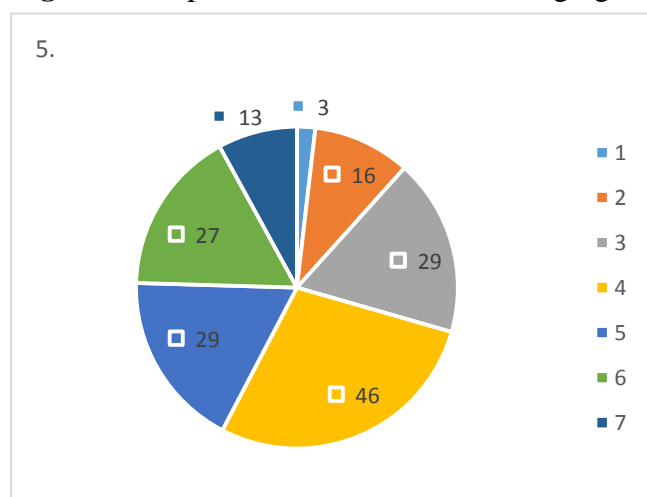
**Table 5:** Preparation of students for changing social and cultural conditions

Does the education system prepare students for changing social and cultural conditions in Europe?

In a satisfactory way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	In an unsatisfactory way.
	3	16	29	46	29	27	13	

Source: own processing

**Figure 5:** Preparation of students for changing social and cultural conditions



Source: own processing

Answers to the following question dealing with the preparation of the education system for changing conditions on labour market also showed diversified students' opinions. The biggest number of respondents decided for the scale position 5 (43 answers) while the numbers of answers related to the scale positions 3 (32), 4 (31), and 6 (27) were almost the same. Only 1 answer appeared in the scale position 1, but there were 12 answers in the scale position 7. It is

necessary to conclude that almost half of the respondents have reservations to the education system in connection with the changing conditions on labour market. The mentioned results are indicated in the graph below.

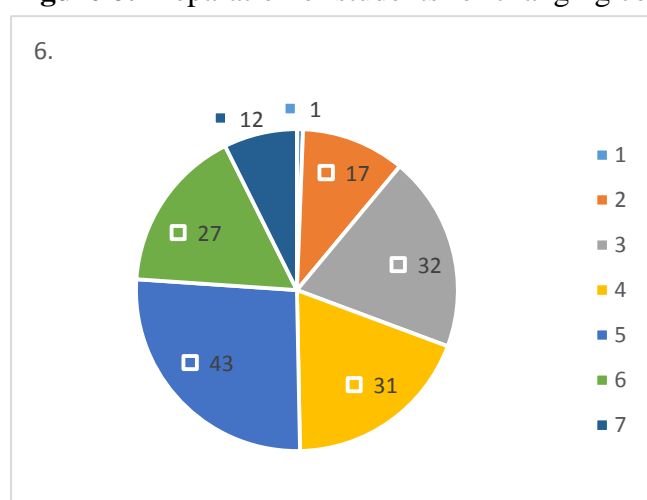
**Table 6:** Preparation of students for changing conditions on labour market

Does the education system prepare for changing conditions on labour market?

In a satisfactory way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	In an unsatisfactory way.
	1	17	32	31	43	27	12	

Source: own processing

**Figure 6:** Preparation of students for changing conditions on labour market



Source: own processing

Answers to the next question related to the significance of political, social and culture processes in Europe and their influence on students' future jobs proved that students are aware of the mentioned processes as students' answers were concentrated between the scale positions 1-4, with almost one third stating important influence (47), while 67 students placed their answers in the scale position 2, 29 in the scale position 3, and 14 in the scale position 4. Only 4 students decided to choose the scale position 5 and 1 student expresses the opinion that current changes will not influence future jobs at all in the scale position 7.

**Table 7:** Influence of political, social and cultural processes on future jobs

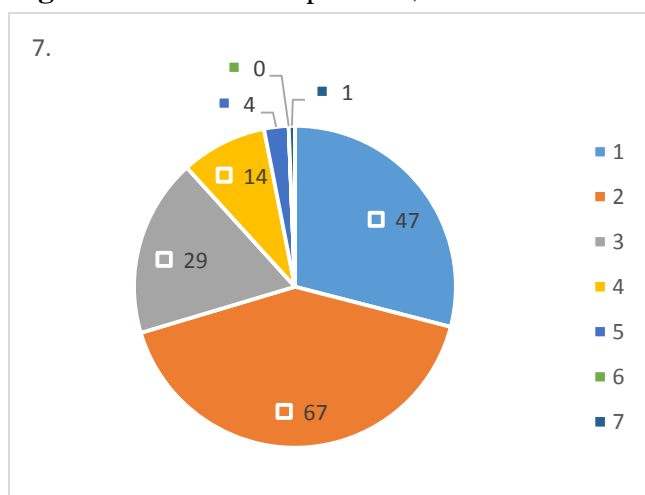
Will current political, social and cultural processes in Europe influence your future job?

Definitely, they will.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Definitely, they won't.
	47	67	29	14	4	0	1	

Source: own processing



**Figure 7:** Influence of political, social and cultural processes on future jobs



Source: own processing

The question number 8 was aimed at the problem of the national identity. Students were expected to state whether they feel to be Czechs and Slovaks or they are Europeans. More than a half of respondents (71) are convinced that they belong to the Czech or Slovak nation, 40 students chose the scale position 2, 15 students the scale position 3 and 16 the scale position 4. Only 5 answers were placed in the scale position 5, 9 students the scale position 6, and 7 students the scale position 7.

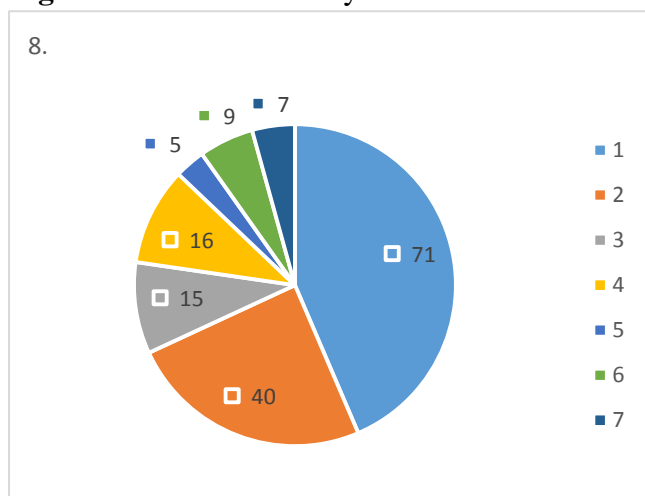
**Table 8:** National identity

Do you feel to be rather

a Czech, Slovak, etc.?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	rather a European
	71	40	15	16	5	9	7	

Source: own processing

**Figure 8:** National identity



Source: own processing

The next part of the research focused on generating associations to the concepts of migration, religion, and tolerance.

Students were able to generate numerous associations, most of them being synonymous, therefore the following paragraphs comprise only one of the synonyms occurring in students' answers.

Associations related to the concept of migration involved concepts related mainly to new culture phenomena, including negative ones, security threats, adaptation, and also nationalities connected with the concept of migration:

maladjustment, job, foreigners, new culture, immigration, emigration, migration police, visas, citizens, better life, escaping violence, population diversity, the EU, Schengen, job opportunities, moving, racism, new society, flight, money, riots, changing habits, security., foreign hostile cultures, threats, refugees, multicultural society, help, fear, chaos, liberty, laws, shortage of work places for Czech citizens, overcrowded country, conflict, adaptation, war, danger, Romas, Japanese, Arabs, Muslims, and Turks.

Associations about the concept of religion were mainly related to culture values and phenomena connected with both tolerance and threats, religion conflicts and wars. Students also refer to the most important world religions:

behaviour, belief, lifestyle, money, business, values, customs and habits, church, God, Bible, cross, influencing people, monk, radicalism, sect, cult, riots, conflicts, fear, war, terrorism, tolerance, diversity, hope for the future, respect, personality, backward opinions, profit organizations, Vatican, Christianity, Budhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, atheism, catholics, and protestants.

Associations related to the concept of tolerance focused on the phenomena connected with respect, multiculturalism, but also with prejudice, and Romas:

Adaptation, confidence, respect, marriage, relationships, intolerance, expressing your own opinion, assertiveness, empathy, multiculturalism, minorities, cultures, religions, compassion, nations, age, compromise, prejudice, support, freedom, partnership, family, security, hope, peace, happiness, friendship, foreigners, and Romas.

Students generated numerous synonymous associations, sometimes not connected with the concept, in some cases showing discrepancies between what they had stated in the previous answers in the questionnaire.

### **3 Discussion**

Having evaluated the results of the survey, referring to the hypothesis 1, it is possible to state that religion and culture diversity is perceived by students rather in a positive way, but the majority of students answers to question 1 are placed in the middle of the scale, which shows that they are not able to determine their scale position precisely.

The hypothesis number 2 related to compassion and tolerance shows that students distinctly chose the left side of the offered spectrum and confirms that they highly appreciate these phenomena. Monocultural society presents the guaranty of security for minority of students.

In the hypothesis 3 the estimation that students will incline to the concept of multicultural society has been confirmed, but the biggest number of students chose the scale position 4 in the offered spectrum, which probably means that it is difficult for them to state their opinions in this topic. However, they are aware of the problem of religious radicalism related to ethnic minorities causing problems in some societies.

The hypothesis 4 presumed that current political, social and cultural processes will not have any impact on students' future careers. However, students' answers proved that students are aware of the mentioned processes and current political, social and cultural processes in Europe will definitely influence their future jobs.

The hypothesis 5 estimating students' positive opinions related to the changing of social and cultural conditions in Europe has been confirmed and the hypothesis 6 related to the negative attitude to the education system and its preparation for the current changes has been agreed on by students too. Students' opinions are diversified showing prevailing placement of answers in the middle of the semantic differential scale, which can be interpreted in two ways: the students are not sure about their answers or they are only partly satisfied with the education system recognizing its weak points too.

Summarizing the above mentioned results, it is possible to state that the submitted hypotheses have been confirmed partly and some students' answers are surprising. Associations presented by students in the last part of the survey are indicating that students are able to see various phenomena typical for the changing world and are aware of the fact that some of them can significantly influence their future.

## **Conclusion**

The submitted article deals with the students' attitudes to culture and religion diversity as well as to the changing conditions on the labour market interconnected with the education system and its preparedness to react to the changes. Although the survey carried out at School of Business Administration in Karviná, Silesian University in Opava, in 2015 involved only a limited number of students, its results bring significant information related to the topic as well as inspiration for an extended survey as the topic belongs to the most current and discussed ones not only in the Czech Republic, but also in globalized Europe, the importance of which will be increasing in the future in connection with the process of migration.

The most interesting data acquired in the survey involve students' attitudes to religion and culture diversity, compassion and tolerance, the concept of multicultural society, and political, social and cultural processes taking place in the society. Students have proved that they are able to see various phenomena typical for the changing world and are aware of the fact that some of them can significantly influence their future.

The survey also showed interesting opinions related to the preparedness of the education system for the changes in European countries. Students' answers indicate the fact that their attitudes to the education system are not positive, which can be explained by students' awareness about the lack of proper reacting to the changes in education systems and about the necessity to deal with them. As Skalková (2004, p. 4) lists, there is a tension between the trend of homogenisation of cultures and their plurality and originality, therefore it is vital to include the topic in education programmes.

Students are not properly prepared for the mentioned changes, which is probably a reflection of an inflexible education system being unable to react to the changing conditions in labour market promptly. This fact is closely connected with introducing key competencies that by the current labour market required (Belz, Siegrist, 2001; Lepič, Koucký, 2012; Veteška, Tureckiová, 2008; Bobáková, Chýlková, 2014).

However, it is positive that the students are aware of the mentioned changes, but at the same time they realize the drawbacks of the education system. The results of research conducted in this area show that the graduates' structure in the CR does not correspond with the requirements at universities and in companies. (Zelená kniha 2008, p. 43).

The goal of the article was to indicate certain aspects in the globalizing society, especially the fact that people have to be prepared for the expected changes to be able to react to them positively. As Belz a Siegrist (2008, p. 174) emphasized competences that enable to cope with problems related to the changes during people's carriers are vital nowadays.

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